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Aceh's next generation

Scott Baldauf | Staff writer of The
Christian Science Monitor

BANDA ACEH, INDONESIA — For 6-year-old Feri, the journey from disaster to recovery has already lasted literally one-sixth of his entire life.

Before the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami, Feri lived in a two-story brick-and-mortar house and enjoyed being spoiled by his three older siblings. He didn't bother much with chores, and his mother Juriah never pushed him too hard. He went to school in nearby Lampulo, surrounded by cousins and friends.

When I first met Feri last April, he was a quiet child, often hiding behind his mother's skirt. Little wonder: he had lost his home and his older siblings to the waves. Feri's family is one of two in Indonesia that the *Monitor* has been following since the tragedy.

At the time, Feri's family had left a crowded relief camp and set out to rebuild their home themselves. The other family had chosen to wait in a tent for the aid programs to kick in. In the third part of this series, we examine whether the different paths to rebuilding chosen by their parents have made a difference in their young lives.

Feri's parents may have chosen to eschew the refugee camp and a handout, but the signs of outside help are visible all around his neighborhood. And he's reaping the benefits.

He sees homes being built around him by the aid group, CARE. He attends school in a barracks built by Coca-Cola, he eats food donated by the World Food Programme, and gets occasional vaccinations from UNICEF. In the afternoons, he goes to a play group organized by Save the Children as part of its Safe

Play Area program.

With each new structured activity in his life, Feri's behavior improves and his former sullenness diminishes.

His schoolteacher, Siti Sofiah, says that her children — only five survivors from a class of 45 — have become harder to control after the tsunami. Some kids talk back, others have difficulty focusing on their studies. Many live in broken or single-parent families. Feri's best friend, Iqbal, lost his mother in the tsunami. Iqbal's father, like many widowers here, has since remarried, and Iqbal treats Feri's mother as a surrogate mother.

Tsunami stress affects many kids. Feri shows few outward signs of stress that many displaced children of Aceh have — including bed-wetting, clinginess, nightmares, inability to concentrate, and bouts of extreme misbehavior.

He has all the energy of a boy his age, and a gift for working on bicycles. Around the house, he does a few chores like sweeping and making the beds. But his mother, Juriah, says he has also become more naughty since the tsunami, throwing tantrums, for example, when she doesn't give him money for candy.

Most people have coping mechanisms to deal with tragedy, says Marwan Hasibuan, coordinator for psychological programs in Banda Aceh, and host of a radio talk show that helps Acehnese deal with issues of stress.

"People call us up and tell us their children are misbehaving, or wet their beds, or cling to their parents," says Mr. Hasibuan. "We tell them, these are normal reactions to abnormal situations. It's not always going to be this way. People have resources inside

them, but it takes time to draw that out, and to show people they have their own ability to cope."

250 schools rebuilt

Overall, the lot of children in Indonesia's troubled Aceh Province is slowly improving after a year-long outpouring of

humanitarian aid. Two-hundred and fifty schools have been built, 15,000 temporary houses have been constructed, and 60 health clinics have helped to restore medical services in relief camps around the province.

All told, the global aid donor community has pledged nearly

\$7.1 billion in relief aid, with \$4.3 billion of those commitments in the pipeline.

Yet progress is slow. Oxfam reported last week that — from India to Indonesia — only 20 percent of the 1.8 million people left homeless on Dec. 26 will have been

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Viva Morales!

Harry der Nederlanden

After largely falling off the radar in North American newspapers, Latin America is once again an object of acute interest. With the decisive win of Bolivia's presidency by Evo Morales, the commentators are all talking of a major "shift to the left" in Latin America and the revival of a long-dormant Marxism.

Although Bolivia is rather small and unimportant on the global stage, it is sitting on a large reservoir of natural gas at a time when energy is power. More interesting for Latin American politics, however, is the coming to political power

of the country's indigenous peoples.

The country has always been ruled by those of Spanish or mixed extraction. Morales is the first indigenous president of Bolivia, and those who have always been poor, second-class citizens in their own country had reason to celebrate. Their hopes and

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News

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permanently rehoused by the first anniversary. In Aceh, only 75,000 — out of 500,000 left homeless — have moved into temporary barracks. Hundreds of thousands are living with friends and relatives, and 67,000 are in tents.

"Every family, in one way or another, has been affected by this disaster," says Kerstin Fransson, head of child protection for the aid group, Save the Children. "The social fabric has broken down."

Social networks re-emerge

While Feri no longer hides behind his mother's skirt, he still lives in the same two-room shack built last spring by his father Alamsyah in a rubble-strewn area of Banda Aceh where a thriving neighborhood once stood.

Slowly, other wooden shacks are springing up nearby, many of them built by Alamsyah. In each home, there are other rugged little children, Feri's new playmates, who escaped the tsunami.

A similar community is rising up around the other family: Muammar, his wife Zohrasafita, and their two children. After several months in a tent, they moved into a sturdy new home built by the International Organization for Migration. The relief agency is steadily adding housing around them, creating new neighborhoods — and new social networks.

As this infrastructure builds up, the differences that separate the two families are disappearing. Feri's parents, Juriah and Alamsyah, quickly rebuilt their businesses from scratch. Muammar — an artist at a TV station — has been rehired by his old employer.

The families now await the rebuilding of schools, the return of pediatric medical care, the reemergence of a stable neighborhood environment — things that can take years and even decades. They also are seeking a state of normalcy,

something beyond the reach of money alone, something being brought back slowly by family, faith, and time.

"Imagine you are sitting with your father on a bicycle getting groceries in the market," says John Prewitt Diaz, director of psychological relief programs for the American Red Cross in New Delhi. "You see the wave, you try to go back to your house, but the wave is already covering the house. You'll never see your mother and brother again. These are the experiences that children had during the tsunami."

"The truth is, you'll never be the same after an event like this," says Mr. Diaz, "but if you build [on the inner strengths of communities and families] then maybe a community can build itself strong enough so that you can take care of each other."

Even at his tender age, Feri recognizes that his mother needs his support. His mother, Juriah, takes out a photo album quietly and opens to a page of her life that she considers closed.

The pictures, taken years ago, are of her three oldest children, Rahmat, Risa, and Khalid. She saw all three swept away by the tsunami wave as she clutched Feri and 2-year-old Reza.

"If friends come and ask about the children, we tell them [they have died], but if they don't ask, we prefer not to talk about it," says Juriah. "It will only make us sad."

Juriah says Feri understands that his older brothers and sister are dead. He occasionally has bad dreams about them. His teacher at Koran school assures him that they have gone to a better place.

During Ramadan, last month, Feri saw his mom crying as she prayed. He knew she was missing her older children, and Feri had an idea. "He said, 'Mom, why don't you rename me Rahmat, and you

can rename Reza as Khalid,'" Juriah recalls. Rahmat and Khalid are Feri's older brothers, who died. "And we can find another girl who looks like my sister Risa, and then you won't miss anyone anymore."

She smiles. "He cares when people around him are sad." But Juriah herself has difficulty containing her emotions, and she speaks up only when with close friends. At night, when rain seeps through the leaky tin roof onto the beds where her children are sleeping, she cries. "How much things have changed in our lives," she says.

400 orphans placed, playgrounds built

At least Juriah has her children with her. As one of the lead agencies in child protection issues, Save the Children was given the task of placing separated children and orphans into homes. Out of 2,393 children, 400 have been formally placed in homes, and 85 percent of the others are living with relations or family friends. Save the Children has also been setting up Safe Play Areas — monitored play groups run by community volunteers, in schoolrooms or centers away from the rubble where children congregate.

"In some ways, this is not a rebuilding, it's an introduction" to services that 90 percent of Acehnese have never had," says Ms. Fransson. "We hope the volunteers can be good role models, and friends for the children to talk about their feelings. And we hope that parents can rebuild their capacity to be good parents."

Religion stirs memories, brings solace

The hardscrabble, up-from-the-bootstraps life of Feri's family remains a stark contrast to the almost-normal life of four-year-old Athafayath, and his parents Zohrasafita and Muammar. Zohrasafita (friends call her Ira) has turned the decidedly humble but solid house built by the IOM in the farming village of Tingkeum into a comfortable middle-class home. She makes money on the side, selling sarongs and scarves to neighbors, while husband Muammar pulls income from his set-designing job at the local TV station.

Always vivacious, the two children have blossomed over the past year. Fayath, as he is called, likes to enter a room with a bang, executing kung fu moves that would make Jackie Chan proud.

His 18-month-old sister Tasya smiles and flirts with neighbors. Neither show signs of trauma from their harrowing escape from a busy marketplace, held tightly by Ira as a wave swept away thousands behind them.

But the trauma occasionally returns. At Ramadan, for instance, Ira broke into tears, as it finally occurred to her how many close family members she had seen last Ramadan were no longer alive.

"This year, Fayath asked me to go to her grandpa's cemetery to ask him for money for Eid," says Ira. It is common for families to give children money during the Eid feast that follows the month of Ramadan. "So one day, we went to the mass grave in Lambaro," a fishing village outside of Banda. "And I said, maybe our family members are here."

At the grave site, Fayath just stayed quiet, but Ira says he understands. He knows his cousin Pipi, a playmate before the tsunami, is dead. But he can't bear to look at photos of the family. If he does, Ira says, he becomes silent for the day.

To heal these wounds, the family has turned less to foreign aid groups and relied instead on their traditional religious beliefs. Islam has been a source of solace to many Acehnese searching for a way to deal with the upheaval in their lives.

"We just tell ourselves that anything good or bad in life comes from Allah," says Ira. "This is our life, but we can't control it. This helps us deal with it."

Epilogue

When the Monitor first met these two families, earlier this year, they seemed like ideal subjects to help answer the question: Does aid money do any lasting good?

For the two families, the aid efforts did provide small, scattered stepping stones on their own unique paths to a more solid footing. But both have found that the swiftest changes in their lives generally come from their own initiatives and talents.

Feri's parents, Alamsyah and Juriah, who chose out of pragmatism rather than ideology to go it alone, managed to escape from a crowded relief camp by building their own home from scraps. Rather than wait for job retraining programs, Alamsyah used his carpentry skills to make money building homes for other people and a small coffee stall of his own.

Alamsyah and Juriah are still



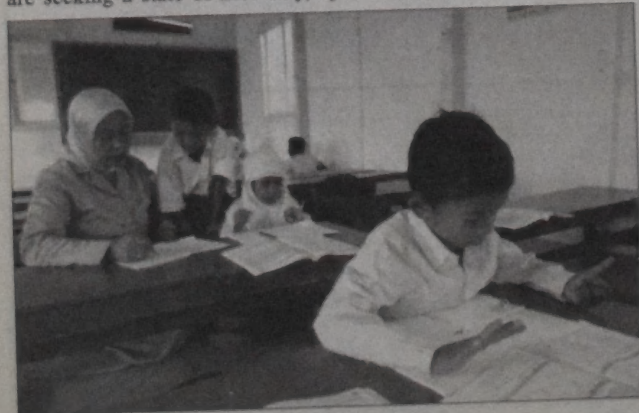
struggling to make ends meet in the same makeshift home. But aid money is starting to make a difference in their lives. Alamsyah took out a no-interest loan for a motorcycle. His oldest surviving son, Feri, now goes to a school donated by Coca-Cola; his family receives food and medical care from the UN; and the fish market is being rebuilt by Americares. Most important, Alamsyah plans to take up an offer by CARE to finish constructing homes for anyone in the neighborhood who wants one, and who has land title.

By contrast, the family of Muammar and Ira typified the majority of people who stand in line, wait their turn, and hope that aid will help them get back on track. Their strategy paid off faster than expected. By April, they occupied a home built by the International Organization for Migration.

Jobs programs were much slower in coming. Muammar spent much of his time visiting aid groups and government institutions seeking aid, while Alamsyah was earning money as a carpenter, taxi driver, and coffee vendor. Today, Muammar's condition has improved dramatically, only partially with foreign aid. He has gotten his old job back at the local TV station, but continues to receive food aid. His kids stay at home, lacking a preschool, but they receive adequate medical checkups.

The differences between the families have largely disappeared. Both are grateful for the aid that has come, but frustrated that it hasn't come faster. Both families recognize they are fortunate to also draw upon middle-class resources, education, and talents that others lack.

"CARE will build the homes over here, but it's too slow," says Alamsyah. "Here they have no building materials.... If I had the materials, I would do it much faster."



Politics

Bolivia ... continued from p.1

expectations are high, for Morales is one of their own. He was a poor llama herder and coca farmer before he became a union leader and entered the political arena.

The indigenous people are talking about a new beginning for Bolivia – and for themselves. About two-thirds of Bolivians – mostly the Indian peoples – live on about \$2 a day.

So Morales ran as the representative of “the people” and his victory is a coming to power of those who were formerly dispossessed and powerless. His populist street protests unseated two previous (democratically elected) presidents by bringing normal life to a halt. Now his party is in power, and the people are looking to him to make dramatic changes in their lives.

His campaign, however, did not just represent the enfranchisement of the poor and the indigenous. His campaign slogan was, “Coca live, Yankee die!” In many of his photos he is standing in front of a huge banner of Che Guevara, the Cuban Marxist revolutionary. He loves to denounce Yankee imperialism and has often expressed his admiration for Fidel Castro and for Hugo Chavez of Venezuela (that’s right, the one Pat Robertson wanted to assassinate). He has promised to nationalize the oil and gas industry and to redistribute the land of some of the large estates in the country.

Under pressure from Morales’ party, previous governments had already imposed hefty royalties on multinational companies of up to 32 percent, so investment has stopped coming into the country. Morales will need help from Brazil and Venezuela to exploit the country’s natural resources, and Morales is looking further afield – to China. All this will take time.

Morales campaigned vigorously against U.S. imperialism, neoliberalism and free trade. With

Michael Ignatieff

Although at one point in his life the Greek philosopher Plato thought that philosophers should become kings, in the real world few intellectuals gravitate towards the life of practical politics. To be sure, during his tenure as prime minister, Pierre Trudeau was often called a philosopher-king – a label as often as not used in disparaging fashion. Yet few political leaders come to their offices from the academy. Thus I was somewhat surprised to hear that Prof. Michael Ignatieff would be standing in the election for the Liberals in Toronto’s Etobicoke-Lakeshore riding, with his eye eventually on Paul Martin’s job.

Ignatieff was born into an old Russian aristocratic family, which fled the Bolshevik Revolution and settled in Canada. Michael’s father George (1913-1989) was a respected diplomat, Chancellor of the University of Toronto and recipient of the Order of Canada. Michael’s maternal cousin was the late George Parkin Grant (1918-1988), whose conservative vision of Canadian nationhood was deeply antipathetic to the liberal individualism Michael has come to champion. Much of his life has been spent in Britain and the United States, and he most recently taught human rights at Harvard.

Now he has returned to take up a position at the University of Toronto and has seized the opportunity presented by the defeat of Martin’s government to make a bid for a seat in the Commons. What sort of political leader would he be?

While I found much to like in his 1984 book, *The Needs of Strangers*, in which he qualified his liberal individualism with an appreciation for community, his more recent works show him to have made a potentially troubling change in direction. The turning point seems to have been his work on the television series and companion volume, both titled *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*. His recognition of the dangers of nationalism appears to have made him wary of the claims of community in general.

Thus in his *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, Ignatieff argues that “Rights are meaningful only if they confer entitlements

good reason. Like many other Latin American countries, Bolivia has languished under the “free trade” regimen of the last 20 years. Average income today is lower than it was 20 years ago.

Why the coca slogan? Coca leaves form the base for the manufacture of cocaine, so they have been targeted in the U.S. war on drugs. However, coca leaves are also part of indigenous culture. They are chewed, made into tea and used in a variety of Indian practices. But growing coca was outlawed when Bolivia entered into an agreement with the U.S. as the latter sought to cut off the source of cocaine flowing north. In exchange, the country has received billions in foreign aid. Not a great deal of it, however, found its way to the cocaleros – the poor coca farmers.

So the program was felt as a form of oppression by the cocaleros. Concerted efforts were made to switch them to other crops, but with very limited success. They are poorer now than they were before the program came into effect.

With his extreme left-wing rhetoric and his promise

to legalize the growing of coca, Morales endangers the \$200 million per year in aid his country receives in foreign aid from the U.S. He has promised that the production of cocaine will continue to be banned.

However, as I write, Morales is receiving a huge welcome in China, and he has invited the Chinese communist government to help him develop Bolivia’s gas reserves. China has been actively seeking to acquire new sources of energy for its booming economy, so the partnership may indeed work for the good of the Bolivian people, or at least for the benefit of the poor.

Like so many Latin American countries, Bolivia has seen its share of revolutions. Let’s hope that this time their hopes are not dashed and that Morales can do for an impoverished people what 20 years of “free enterprise” has not been able to accomplish. Many commentators, however, fear it will be at the cost of democratic freedoms.

It won’t be easy for Morales. His policies have been strongly opposed in the eastern and southern parts of the country, which rely on trade and foreign investment. As was the case in Venezuela, if Morales can’t deliver, the danger is that civil conflict will erupt.

**Principalities & Powers**

David T. Koyzis

and immunities on individuals; they are worth having only if they can be enforced against institutions like the family, the state, and the church.” Furthermore, in *The Rights Revolution*, presented as the 2000 CBC Massey Lectures, he asserts that communities have value only insofar as they help individuals to achieve their own goals and aspirations.

So what happens if the claims of individual and community come into conflict? What if, say, a church institution disciplines one of its members for being unfaithful to her husband or one of its clergy for preaching heresy from the pulpit? What if the Salvation Army “discriminates” against an otherwise qualified unbelieving prospective employee and hires a confessing Christian more obviously agreeing with the organization’s vision? Where does justice lie in these potential disputes?

For Ignatieff the answer is simple: “Group rights – to language, culture, religious expression, and land – are valuable to the degree that they enhance the freedom of individuals. This suggests that when group rights and individual rights conflict, individual rights should prevail.” Period.

While manifesting a proper concern for individual liberties, it would be difficult to imagine an approach less conducive to the doing of justice to the full complexity of human social life in God’s world. Rather than hearing and weighing carefully the conflicting claims in the political arena, Ignatieff has already made up his mind before the claims have even been made. Someone less charitable than I might well see fit to label this prejudice.

Prime Minister Ignatieff? We’ll pass on that, thank you.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning *Political Visions and Illusions* (InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at: <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.

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Guest editorial

Religious liberty: from 2005 into 2006

Elizabeth Kendal

Just as the industrial revolution brought changes that made the world a smaller place, the changes being brought by the revolution in communications and information technology are making the world a more open place.

But change rarely comes easily. Change can generate tension and conflict between new competitors, as well between those who benefit from and endorse it, and those who are threatened by and reject it. As the world opens up, people find they have choices. But choices cannot be appreciated without liberty. While multitudes of people do or could benefit from liberty and therefore endorse it, dictators and false ideologies are threatened by it and therefore reject it.

These days it is liberty, not territory or even resources, that is central to most conflicts.

The power of openness

In the past, isolation has been a powerful weapon with which to control and basically imprison and subjugate entire populations. But for isolation to be an effective controller of the people it must be absolute. In the past isolation was achieved (with various degrees of success) through sealing off the outside world – thus imprisoning the nation – and then frequently purging the population. In this age of globalisation and information technology, isolation is increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to achieve or maintain.

Openness, whether overt or covert, breaches prison walls. It lets light and fresh air in; cries and odor out. Thanks to openness, the free can see in and the prisoners can see out. Openness presents people with choices. As people faced with real choices demand real liberty, pressure builds – eventually reaching breaking point. The length of time this takes depends on the depth of darkness, the strength of the fortifications, and the nature of the breaches (overt or covert).

After watching the explosion in Eastern Europe that shattered the Soviet Empire, the Chinese Communist Party chose to defuse internal pressure quickly and decisively. The Tiananmen Square massacre prevented a similar explosion in Asia. Asia now monitors and controls internal pressure: minimizing it through state repression, and defusing it through persistent persecution, primarily incarceration and violent intimidation.

But these days, the power of openness is such that isolation is like virginity – once lost, it simply cannot be regained.

Protecting failing systems

In this increasingly open world, information, knowledge,

and ideology are on trial like never before. Only truth is strong enough to withstand scrutiny, which is why Christianity is not, and never has been, threatened by openness or liberty. Truth defends itself.

Regimes and ideologies that cover-up or falsify history and use deception, repression and persecution to hold on to power, should see their dependence upon those means as evidence of their inherent weakness. The prison, which is built on a foundation of power-lust, protects the dictator, the regime, or the ideology, not the masses.

In the early part of the 7th Century, Mohammad attempted to bring religious reform to the pagan Arabs. He preached a message of monotheism and decried the Arabs' idolatry which centred around worship of the moon and pilgrimages to the Kabah in Mecca, a city which was economically sustained by its idolatry industry. While Mohammad wanted to be recognized and followed as God's prophet, he was instead rejected and persecuted.

Eventually Mohammad and his small band of followers were forced to flee to Medina. There Mohammad reinvented himself. No longer would he be rejected and persecuted. In order to secure the allegiance he believed, or at least claimed, he was owed, Mohammad established and strictly applied repressive laws.

Mohammad's laws pertaining to blasphemy, criticism, apostasy and other liberty issues enabled him to crush opposition, obliterate scrutiny, engender compliance, and sustain a dictatorship by denying liberty to both his followers and his subjects. Because Mohammad decreed that his laws were from Allah, he secured for them (in the hearts of Muslims) a divine, eternal and universal authority, inseparable from Islam.

Right to this day, Islam secures the allegiance of Muslims through threat of death. Right to this day Islam demands protection from openness and scrutiny, and bunkers down behind a fortification of repressive religious laws which include the denial of religious liberty.

In this age of openness this is not only unacceptable and unreasonable, it is also increasingly unmanageable. Islam does not fear the battlefield – Islam only fears liberty. But Islam will be scrutinized, just like everything else. Islamic resistance, though it may shed much blood, will be in vain.

Tribalism, nationalism and now anti-ngo-ism!

In recent years, tribalism and religious nationalism have been employed to resist change. While these have led to an increase in persecution, they have not been able to resist openness and prevent the flow of information.

Those who hope to keep "their people" in some degree of isolation and ignorance for the purpose of wielding power over them find non-government organizations (NGOs) a real nuisance. The NGOs educate or enlighten the people, thus generating (often inadvertently) internal pressure. They also report to the outside world (possibly only to their international headquarters) thus generating external pressure.

Christian NGOs also expose people to sacrificial, non-sectarian humanitarianism, something modeled by Christ and integral to true Christianity but not generally found in Empire building, warrior, self-serving or fatalistic religions. This generates extreme religious tension and jealousy in those religious dictators who find the hearts of "their people" gravitating towards those who sacrificially love and serve them.

In Sri Lanka, Buddhist nationalists have, for several years, been escalating their persecution of the Church. In recent years they have been campaigning to criminalize conversions and ban Christian witness. Recognizing the problem presented by openness, they have also targeted foreign NGOs, especially World Vision, and were making real inroads until the Boxing Day Tsunami rendered Sri Lanka in desperate need of all the NGO assistance it could get.

But need does not quieten all dictators, religious or

otherwise. Many would sooner see "their people" homeless, drug addicted, and dying of preventable disease than risk losing their influence over them. Islamic religious dictators in tsunami-devastated Aceh are extremely hostile to the NGOs. On December 26, *The AGE* (Melbourne, Australia) published Mark Forbes' report on his Christmas Day in Banda Aceh: "Police with machine-guns guarded Banda Aceh's churches.... Thousands of foreign aid workers in Banda Aceh for the tsunami reconstruction were warned to keep Christmas celebrations low profile and no Christian charities held public events. Two days ago 100 Islamic students demonstrated in the capital, calling for Christian charities to leave, alleging they were converting Muslims."

Forbes comments on the enthusiastic Christmas service in Banda Aceh's Catholic Church and then notes, "At the nearby Methodist church, many of the congregation had returned from Sumatra where they fled when their homes were destroyed. Twenty baptisms were performed, a reflection of the increased post-tsunami attendance."

During 2005, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Belarus and Russia all advanced their isolationist policies and enacted laws that severely restrict the activities of NGOs. In each case the stated aim is to rid the nation of "Western spies" and "subversive elements" and "cultural imperialists" for the sake of "national security" and "social harmony" and "cultural integrity."

In this age of openness via radio, satellite, mass media, Internet and mobile phone, it may be possible to restrict, minimize and slow down the flow of information, but it is impossible to stop it. Vain attempts to stop the flow of information can only heighten suspicion, and exacerbate internal unrest, repression, persecution and conflict.

Dictators extend fortifications by forming alliances

Dictators are forming alliances to bolster themselves against the forces of openness and liberty. This strategy of forming alliances to remove the leverage of open, free, reform-advocating nations has existed within the United Nations for some time and is beginning now to function openly in the relationships between nation states. Because of these alliances, advocates of religious liberty (and liberty in general) will increasingly find their voices drowned and their actions frustrated.

Zimbabwe, Libya, Sudan, Belarus, Iran, China, Russia, Central Asia, Cuba and other repressive, resistant states are developing their alliances and support structures. Thanks to the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) even small, poor nations like Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan can thumb their noses at the United States and its Freedom from Religious Persecution Act, because they now have China and Russia as committed allies.

China and Iran have both offered support to Belarus' President Lukashenko as he seeks to prevent a popular uprising and preserve his repressive, Soviet-style dictatorship. Iran even promised to help Belarus resist Western pressure! What on earth does that mean? Belarus will hold a presidential election on 19 March 2006 – maybe we will find out then.

One commentator has described the SCO as "a huddling of harried elites." Well it may be expected that in their vain battle to maintain the status quo and preserve their fortresses, more and more dictators will seek to find strength and comfort in "huddling." But ultimately, no amount of huddling can resist such powerful and pervasive winds of change.

Choosing, resisting, and preserving

The revolution in information technology is bringing us into a whole new era in world history. It is now very easy to imagine the 21st Century being the century when the gospel will reach into every corner of the world via indigenous church planter, foreign humanitarian, radio, film, CD, DVD, MP3, television, satellite, mass media, literature, Internet,

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Letters/News

Ann Bultsma, pioneer for Christian education

In your December 19th issue of the *Christian Courier*, you featured a picture of Ann Bultsma, pioneer principal of Duncan Christian School on Vancouver Island in the 1960's. Ann (1917-2006) passed into glory a few days ago. This is a short synopsis of her life.

Ann (Antje) Bultsma passed into the presence of her Lord and Savior on Wednesday morning, January 4th, 2006. She was born in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands on April 18th, 1917 the sixth and last child of Tacke and Jeltje Bultsma. She became a teacher and taught learning disabled students in Holland during and after the war years.

(Her family was very active in the underground movement – a video "De Overval" relates the involvement of her brother Egbert [Eppie] Bultsma) in the release of some one hundred political prisoners from "Het Huis der Bewaring," a jail in Leeuwarden. A street in Leeuwarden has recently been named in his honor.)

Ann immigrated to the US in 1954 and helped start a Christian School in Salt Lake City, Utah. She obtained a BA degree from Calvin College, Michigan in 1957, after which she moved to Canada, becoming the first principal of Duncan Christian School on Vancouver Island in 1960. She was one of the pioneer teachers at John Knox Christian School in Burnaby as well.

After teaching for some years in Fruitland, Ontario, she returned to British Columbia and started a module for special education students at the John Knox Christian School in Burnaby, the first of its kind in B.C.

She loved to teach and was a good painter, having an eye for the color and beauty of God's creation. She was keenly interested in all matters relating to Christian education. During her later years, she continued to praise God for his faithfulness, mercy and grace, marveling that he used her, an unworthy vessel, to pass on his truths to the next generations.

We praise God for the life of this courageous, colorful and creative teacher.

Keep up the good work with your paper! Shalom

Johanna Campbell
CTABC Executive Director
PS: Ann Bultsma was my aunt.

Liberty 2005-2006 cont. from p. 4

and mobile phone.

The enemies of liberty have a vested interest in resistance. They will continue to purge their ranks, silence opposition, crush dissent, terrorise the masses and plug the breaches. This is already happening in Belarus, Iran, North Korea, Eritrea, China, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba and other states where dictatorial regimes are stepping up the fight against openness and liberty through systematic repression and persecution. It is also happening in India, Sri Lanka and the Muslim world as religious dictators from religious organisations fight libertarians, crushing multitudes in the process.

The battle has also begun to boil over in the West as the religious dictators within Muslim communities fight libertarians for the religious liberty to remove religious liberty. But in North America and Western Europe it has also been Muslims who have been the loudest, most informed, impassioned and powerful voices against the Islamic religious dictators.

So it is not really a choice of standing for or against the Muslim activists. Rather it is a choice of which Muslims do we stand with: the Islamic religious dictators or the Muslims appealing for liberty? The only justice is in liberty. It is imperative that we choose liberty.

The only way to defeat darkness is with light and the only way to defeat error is with truth. Yet we see Christians and Western leaders surrendering, in the name of political correctness and tolerance, to the demands of religious dictators to keep religious criticism or the gospel of Jesus Christ out of earshot of "their people" allegedly because it offends their religious sensitivities or infringes their right not to hear it. This is both a disaster and gross abuse of the fundamental human right of

religious liberty.

So too is surrendering to the dictate that we indiscriminately and uncritically tolerate, even respect, all cultural practices. But Western multicultural societies have already judged and rejected many foreign cultural practices, religious and otherwise. Cannibalism, hallucinogenic drug taking, caste and untouchability, suttee (the Hindu practice of burning a widow on her husband's funeral pyre), FGM (female genital mutilation), honour killing, forced marriage, as well as many other barbarous or abusive practices are not respected and not tolerated. They are banned so rights and liberties can be preserved.

Surrendering to the dictatorial demands of religious dictators is akin to re-building prison walls around people who desire and deserve to be free. That Christians and Western leaders are falling for this ploy of religious dictators to keep "their people" isolated, ignorant and enslaved, is outrageous. These measures, to repress religious information and deny religious liberty to multitudes, are ultimately all about power, control, and religious dictatorship. These calls must be resisted and liberty preserved.

Truth does not need to be protected behind a fortification of repression and persecution. Religious liberty does not deny anyone the right to reject the message. But religious liberty emphatically denies that anyone has the right to enslave and imprison another through the removal or denial of their fundamental liberties.

2006

Advancing openness and liberty is the most important thing we can do – not simply liberty to vote, but liberty to write and read, to preach and hear, to think and learn, and to believe. (In reality, and for effectiveness, these

Children First program accepting applications for education grants

TORONTO, ON, January 4, 2006 — Children First: School Choice Trust (Children First), a multi-million dollar education initiative for Ontario families, announced today that the program has begun accepting applications for education grants for the 2006-07 school year.

Administered by The Fraser Institute and established in 2003, Children First is Canada's only privately-funded program to help parents in financial need send their children to an independent elementary school of their choice.

Since the demise of the Equity in Education Tax Credit, these grants offer the only financial aid available for lower-income families to use at any independent school in the province.

"Getting this grant for my child is a dream come true," said Anna Nam, mother of a Children First grant recipient. "Without the program's help we would not be able to afford the tuition fee. Now we have great hope our son will have a better education and future."

The program currently provides tuition assistance grants to 800 elementary-school students in Ontario, based solely on financial need. These grants pay 50 percent of the tuition at any of the over 800 independent schools in the province, to an annual maximum of

\$3,500. The grants are available as early as junior kindergarten and will continue until the students complete Grade 8.

In the 2006-07 school year, the grants' value will increase to 50 percent of tuition to a maximum of \$4,000 per year to ensure families a broad selection of affordable independent schools. The average tuition at schools chosen by Children First families is currently \$4,400 and the average grant just over \$2,000.

The program will award about 250 new grants this April by lottery. Parents can apply online at www.childrenfirstgrants.ca, submit an application by mail, or apply over the phone at 1-866-924-8881. The application deadline is March 31, 2006.

"Children First supports my decision to educate my children in the best possible way," said Bronwen Chisholm, mother of two children involved in the program. "My children are receiving the learning resources they need, and are growing in their confidence, faith and abilities."

Children First will be expanding to Alberta, the second province in which the program will be offered, in 2006. Details of that program will be announced at a launch event to be held on Tuesday January 31st, in Calgary.

should ideally come first.)

If we actually believed that political dictates or military might were God's vehicle for the fulfillment of his promises, then we would have grounds for serious despair, or at least profound confusion. However, the risen Lamb is not threatened by dragon or sword. His Spirit cannot be restrained. God has made promises that will be fulfilled not by political dictates, and not by might or force, but by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Church of Jesus Christ as she prays, preaches, advocates, loves and serves in obedience to his will.

As long as the gospel of salvation is repressed and the God's children are persecuted and imprisoned, the Lord will cry from Heaven, "Let my people go!" Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who firmly believed that God shares the suffering of his people (Isaiah 63:9, Acts 9:5), believed it was imperative that a Christian "stand by God

in his hour of grieving".

And so as we enter 2006, the exhortation is to "stand by God" who declares that his salvation is free (Isaiah 55). And let's faithfully, courageously, energetically, passionately, sacrificially and expectantly persist in prayer empowered advocacy and mission, and scripture inspired prayer for the preserving, empowering and expansion of the Church of Jesus Christ and for religious liberty everywhere.

"Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between chaff and wheat! Does not my word burn like fire?" Asks the LORD. "Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes rock to pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:28,29, NIV)

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Review

Violence dehumanizes us all

"Munich... is a prayer for peace."
Steven Spielberg

I have known for some time I needed to write this column but find no joy in it. Last November I suggested we celebrate the negotiation successes of the U.N. on Remembrance Day because their efforts have given us a safer world. I also acknowledged that conflict is normal and those on the home front could live more peacefully through learning conflict resolution and negotiating skills. All this is true.

But even though the world is less scary... it is still scary. While it may be safer for some African countries, it has become inherently more dangerous for the Mid-East and the industrial West. Terrorism has brought violence to our doorstep and we feel it viscerally. We know it would take only a few deranged people with the powerful weapons of today to do the sort of carnage not even whole armies could achieve years ago.

Timely terror?

The film "Munich" is the work of a tormented filmmaker and could not have come at a more appropriate time. Spielberg used to see himself as an "entertainer," but at age 59 he felt he had to take a risk and make this film. The shoot was the most painful and difficult one of his life. And while my column is not a comprehensive critique of the film, I agree with Rachel Abramowitz of the *Los Angeles Times* when she writes: "Politically, the film is a Rorschach test. Some will see a glamorized Israeli Mossad squad, dispatching villains with ingenuity, fiercely committed to the perpetuation of the Jewish state; others will be infuriated that any of the Israeli commandos express any qualms about their mission. Some will be troubled that the Palestinian terrorists have been humanized, and others will be sure that they haven't been humanized or validated enough. At the end, it's a visceral, emotional piece of work that doesn't offer any solutions."

In short, how we see the film could be more about the viewer's values than Spielberg's. Yet, I do think Spielberg points the way to a safer world.

For myself, the film is far less a political statement than about the psychological and social process of killing and how violence degrades

and has a corrosive effect on the soul of both perpetrators and victims. In the film we see the main character, as well as the other team members move from unquestioned acceptance of their order to kill to struggling with the validity of what they are doing. Eventually, the carnage created by their trail of vengeance becomes too much for them.

A clarifying moment occurs when three members of the Israeli squad take time off from their "official duties" to seek revenge onto a European hit woman for killing one of their team members. She dies with her robe open; her bloodied body sprawled in a chair. Later, one of the three members has regrets and says to Avner, the leader "I wish I had let you close up her housecoat."

Steven Spielberg puts a human face on his characters through the preparation and eating of food as they sit around the communal table. He also uses the rhythms of family life to portray the Israelis, the Palestinians as well as the French informant patriarch and his son - to whom they pay large sums of money for the whereabouts of the Palestinian terrorists they need to kill - as caring family members. He also uses sexual bonding as a healing salve for Avner's troubling symptoms of post-traumatic stress. He concludes the film with a brief dialogue about "breaking bread together" that brings this heart-wrenching story to a reflective end. Throughout the film Spielberg tries to balance the "normal" with the "terrible" allowing the viewer to feel compassion and repugnancy at the same time.

A desensitized society

I believe Spielberg wanted to do something meaningful with

Avner with child



the Munich massacre in terms of the terrorism that is going on in the world today. Understanding this film on a psychological and sociological level will give the absolute accuracy of the actual event less importance. What is important is becoming aware of the dynamics of perpetual violence. Lt. Col. Dave Grossman's book *On Killing: the psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society* is an affirmation of Spielberg's film in terms of the psychological and social process of killing.

Through various studies Grossman has found the vast majority of soldiers are very reluctant to kill. During WW II only 15 to 25 percent of soldiers were willing to fire their rifles. Modern training, however, taught them to overcome their reluctance. In Korea about 50 percent were willing to shoot. In Vietnam the figure rose to over 90 per cent. He believes modern army training conditions soldiers to overcome their instinctive loathing of killing. However, it also leaves them open for serious post-traumatic stress, as was evident when the Vietnam veterans came home.

The sad news is Grossman believes our contemporary civilian society, particularly the media, is similar to the army's conditioning techniques through high-body-count movies, television violence (both news and entertainment), and interactive point-and-shoot video games, all of which are dangerously similar to the training programs that dehumanizes the enemy and is responsible for our rising rates of murder and violence, particularly among the young. All of this desensitizes us to the psychological ramifications of killing, and makes pulling the trigger a much more automatic

Getting Unstuck Arlene Van Hove



Pensive assassin

response. In 1999 he wrote the book *Stop teaching our Kids to Kill: A call to action against T.V., movie and video game violence* to warn parents of the dangers of violent video games.

Pascal and Spielberg

Spielberg tries hard to balance and honor the memories of the slain Olympic athletes and portray the Israelis as well as the Palestinians as fellow human beings. This is difficult since most of us are only comfortable with conflicts that have obvious boundaries between good and evil such as in WWII. But even then, when well-known Canadian author Farley Mowat came home from that war, he did not celebrate victory but escaped from a "modern society that for him was a symbol of death and shame" to Northern Canada for two years. Now at age 85, he continues to hold a pessimistic view of human nature.

Spielberg was clear about filming the Munich story according to how the world is. There is no doubt he created a hyper-violent work with some intense dialogue that lodges into the brain like a shard of glass. His hope is the film will challenge us to seek better

ways to resolve long-standing conflicts and especially to work towards understanding one another regardless of race and creed.

All of this brings us to Blaise Pascal who once wrote "most of the evils of life arise from man's being unable to sit still in a room."

If we listen carefully to Spielberg's film we will hear these words as an accusation. It doesn't matter who is blaming whom because it applies to all of us. Both Pascal and Spielberg suggest reflection is the first step towards solving the violence in our society. The second step is implied in the last scene, as Avner and Ephraim are part of an insightful dialogue about "breaking bread together". I have not yet found a film critic who has touched on this exchange. But it is this dialogue and the surprising response that points the way to what could (or could not) be another step towards making this world a safer place for all.

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Church/Stewardship

A desired diversity?

Arie Leder

A colleague once told me of an evangelical church that converted its administrative structure thusly. The variety of agencies and institutions of this church had been administered by executives of various kinds for some years. Over time, surprise, this structure developed into a top down management corporation. In a fit of honesty, the authorities made a decision: Even though their traditional polity was anything but top-down, they converted all the executives into bishops. Now they were a church again.

The CRCNA is nowhere close to that, I think. Nevertheless, our church political structures are under full court pressure. Consider the following. Over the last several decades the agencies and institutions of the CRCNA have developed into a large administrative structure, much larger than it had when the denomination was substantially larger. Objections notwithstanding, this structure has created a centralizing effect that has left the traditional ecclesiastical assemblies behind. Except for the attempt at classical renewal, which is, in effect, the work of two agencies trying to reshape an assembly in their own image, the large administrative structure tends toward the episcopalian model of church government.

We still enjoy the traditional forms of deliberation in the assemblies—thus the traditional form of reformed church polity—but even there the inclination is towards speed, quick, top-down type management decisions, especially in the local church councils. These often have administrative elders and pastoral elders. More efficient, you know. On the other hand, local councils, in part because of the decisions made “in the center,” and in part because of the hard press of congregationalist political culture, tend more and more to go their own. Their verdict on ministry shares and programs developed at the center: “Let them eat cake!”

But hold on. This may not be a problem, but an opportunity: one church with a diverse church political culture. Should we be excited about that and celebrate? The CRCNA may yet become the envy of mainline churches, especially those that insist on a uniform church polity.

The original of this article appeared on CRConnect: www.crconnect.org

Canada's churches join challenge to refugee agreement

Ferdy Baglo

Vancouver, Canada (ENI) – A Canadian church agency has joined forces with two other groups in a legal challenge to a Canada-United States agreement they say endangers refugees seeking asylum in North America.

The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), together with Amnesty International and the Canadian Council for Refugees, launched a challenge in Canada's Federal Court to the “Safe Third Country Agreement,” one year after it came into effect in December 2004.

The agreement states that both Canada and the US are safe countries and that asylum seekers who pass through either country are prohibited from entering the other country in order to make a refugee claim.

“We have in place a law that sends people back to claim in the US when those people may in fact not be protected and end up being sent back home to face persecution,” said Janet Dench, the executive director of the refugee council.

The three Canadian organizations are asking the court to overturn the designation of the US as a safe country. They argue the US does not respect its obligations under the Convention Against Torture and the Refugee Convention.

The groups also argue that by returning refugee claimants to the US for determination, Canada is violating its international obligations towards refugees, as well as the refugees' rights under the Canadian constitution.

Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the CCC, told ENI that the council was backing the challenge because Christian churches have a long history of support for refugees.

“That goes back to our biblical and theological mandate to care for the widow, the orphan, the sojourner—those who are vulnerable in our society,” she said.

Amnesty International's refugee coordinator, Gloria Nafziger, highlighted the situation of Colombian asylum seekers: “Colombians are not able to reach Canada and are forced [under the agreement] to apply for protection in the United States, where they are much more likely to be rejected,” she wrote in *The Toronto Star*.

However, Greg Scott from Citizenship and Immigration Canada said the US-Canadian agreement seemed to have been a “success.” He said that the number of refugee claims at Canadian borders was down, but that refugee claims had also decreased throughout the world.

Wealth: shackle or lever?

In earlier articles in this column I've written about how important it is for each of us to get our stewardship right for all that God has entrusted to us. It has eternal consequence.

Jesus clearly warns us about our wealth:

...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. (Matt. 19:25)

Whether I like to acknowledge it or not, I happen to be rich, and we live in a favored land. Most of you are too—especially when compared to the poor in third world countries.

Maybe you're thinking, as I am, how do I get through that needle? Is my wealth going to hold me back? If it does, wealth is a bad thing and I should get rid of it.

When a rich young ruler questioned Jesus about how to receive eternal life, Jesus told him to obey the commandments. When he replied he did already, Jesus told him to sell off his wealth, give to the poor, and invited him to be his disciple (see Matt. 19: 16-22 for the whole story). In this case, the rich young ruler's wealth did hold him back—like a shackle around his ankles that kept him from being available for kingdom service. In his case, wealth was a bad thing.

That's one perspective from scripture but there's another. There are wealthy people who have been blessed by God: think of Abraham, Joseph, David, Solomon, and Job. Jesus also talks about using wealth in the right way and how the Father will even bless those who have been faithful in its use. Consider the parable of the shrewd manager who knows he's going to get fired, so he manipulates the accounts to benefit the debtors. Jesus commends this manager because he acted shrewdly (clever, sharp) and tells us:

I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

(Luke 16:9,10)

If you are or want to be a businessperson, you may have an idea that you think meets a need which could make you lots of money in the marketplace. But you don't have the money or the production capacity (people/facilities) to develop and produce the product. Money or wealth is the lever that enables you to make it happen. So it is with Kingdom work too.

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

It takes people and resources for Kingdom work to happen. Your church needs both. Mission work needs missionaries and resources to reach out. Radio transmitters need power to transmit the Gospel. God provides us with the resources and the ability to use these resources to benefit Kingdom ministry. The emphasis is on use.

Wealth, then, is a good thing! How we use it is the important question. Is it just for me, or is it for the kingdom? If it is the latter, don't be surprised that God gives you even more to work with. If it's the former, it's bad news and you'd better figure out how you're going to get thin enough to go through the needle. Jesus taught that “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48). Our worldly wealth is a responsibility. I think it is time for us to pray for those who have been entrusted with much for they will have a lot to account for.

Consider how you are doing: is your wealth leveraging the work of God's Kingdom or is it holding you tight—like a shackle?

Stewardly Tip: Investment with a difference.

Many of us have invested in RRSPs. Consider investing in an RRSP that invests in Christian leadership development (like Kings or Redeemer) or invest in a specific Christian ministry. Make sure that your Will provides for bequests to the Christian charities you care about. Using CSS as the vehicle for this is simple and flexible and much easier for the person handling the estate. Better yet, regularly re-evaluate what you really need as you age and give away what you don't so that it can be leverage now for Kingdom ministry.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Being Stewardly about Funerals

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@cssservices.ca



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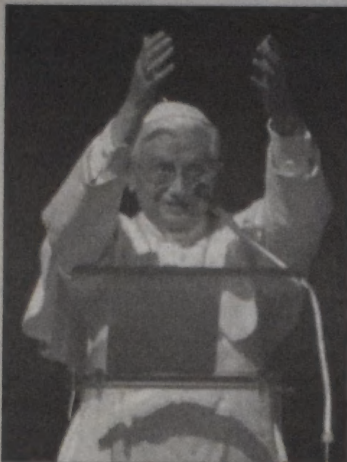
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Church

Pope Benedict hails dialogue with Reformed churches



Stephen Brown
Geneva (ENI) – Pope Benedict XVI has praised dialogue with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), saying the dialogue is helping to surmount “tragic divisions” between Christians going back to the 16th century Protestant Reformation.

The Pope was speaking at the

Vatican on 7 January to a delegation of the Geneva-based alliance led by its president, the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

“I pray that our meeting today will itself bear fruit in a renewed commitment to work for the unity of all Christians,” said Benedict, echoing remarks after his election in April when he pledged that promoting Christian unity would be his “primary task”.

WARC groups more than 200 Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed and United churches, whose roots go back to the 16th-century Reformation which broke with the Roman Catholic Church and whose leaders included John Calvin, the Geneva-based theologian, among others.

Kirkpatrick, in his address at the meeting with Pope Benedict, said he hoped for further steps on the path to unity.

“There is still much to be done to move beyond our past condemnations of one another, to truly respect one another as parts of the one body of Jesus Christ, serve God together without worrying about inhibitions in our nations and to come together at the table of our Lord,” Kirkpatrick said.

He also urged joint action on issues of social justice.

“We are eager during our visit here at the Vatican to pursue with you how Catholic and Reformed Christians might be partners together for God’s justice in a world wracked by poverty, war, ecological destruction, and the denial of human freedom,” Kirkpatrick noted.

Pope Benedict hailed the Catholic-Reformed dialogue as helping to overcome differences.

The dialogue had “made an important contribution to the demanding work of theological reflection and historical investigation indispensable for surmounting the tragic divisions which arose among Christians in the sixteenth century”, he said.

The Pope also spoke of the need for “a purification of memory,” noting his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, had given a “powerful impulse” to this endeavour.

“I am pleased to learn that several of the Reformed Churches which are members of the World Alliance have undertaken similar initiatives,” Benedict added.

WARC general secretary the Rev. Setri Nyomi said after the meeting: “This visit was an important symbol of WARC’s commitment to Christian unity as well as to working with other Christian world communions in transforming the world into more just communities.”

A majority of a government commission wants to loosen the (Lutheran) Church of Norway’s ties to the state, but without moving to a complete separation.

Since the Lutheran-led reformation in 1537, the Church of Norway, the country’s dominant church, has had the reigning king as its formal head. But in recent years, Norwegian society has been reflecting its increasingly multi-faith nature, particularly in urban areas.

Those favoring a relaxation of church-state ties, but not a complete separation, include a Muslim member of the commission.

About 85 per cent of Norway’s 4.5 million inhabitants belong to the Church of Norway.



Christmas day service attacked by mob in Sri Lanka

CSW – Christians in a church in Sri Lanka had their Christmas Day service disrupted by mob violence.

On Christmas Day, a mob of about 30 people accosted members of the King’s Revival Church in Alawwa, Kurunegala District, west central Sri Lanka. They threatened the pastor and warned the congregation not to attend the service. They told the pastor not to hold a Christmas service and warned they would attack again on New Year’s Eve. Many worshippers fled in fear, according to a report by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka.

Those who continued on their way to church were beaten up. One man and three women were injured, and the man was taken to hospital for treatment. One of the women was pregnant.

The incident was reported twice to the local police, on December 25 and December 28, but no action was taken to apprehend the attackers until December 29, when the police finally detained some people for questioning.

In another incident on Christmas morning, a prominent Tamil, Joseph Pararajasingham, MP for the Tamil National Alliance party, was shot dead while attending a late night Christmas Eve service at St. Ann’s Catholic Cathedral in Batticaloa (Eastern Province).

In a separate incident, five days before Christmas, the family of Mr Karunaratne, a deceased Christian, were refused permission to bury their relative in a local public cemetery. Local Buddhists told the family that they could not bury the dead man in the cemetery because he was a Christian. The local police and authorities eventually intervened, and the burial went ahead, but the initial refusal is an example of continuing anti-Christian discrimination in Sri Lanka.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said: “We are most disturbed that this Christian community has been unable to celebrate Christmas in peace. We are also appalled that a family was initially denied permission to bury their relative in a public cemetery, simply because he was a Christian. We are pleased the local authorities appear in both cases to have eventually intervened to uphold the law, but we would urge the Sri Lankan Government at all levels to be proactive in ensuring protection for Christians, equal rights and freedom of religion for all. We urge the authorities to bring the perpetrators of violence to justice, and to do everything possible to eliminate extremism and intolerance.”

For more stories, visit *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* (CSW) www.csw.org.uk

Kenyan churches gather aid for famine-hit regions

By Fredrick Nzwill

Nairobi (ENI) – Churches in Kenya are moving to provide aid for millions of citizens facing starvation due to a severe famine in this East African country, where the head of state has declared the food crisis a national disaster.

“It is sin for somebody to die of hunger. It is also a criminal offence for the government to leave citizens to die of hunger,” said Roman Catholic Bishop Cornelius Korir, chairperson of the Kenya Episcopal Conference.

Church leaders in towns are asking their congregations to drop foodstuffs at church centres or designated places to be delivered as aid to starving populations.

“We should be mindful of our brothers and sisters dying of hunger,” Anglican Bishop Thomas Kogo of Eldoret told the *East African Standard* newspaper on December 29. His diocese and the African Inland Church have launched food collection centres.

They are urging farmers in western Kenya who have been enjoying bumper harvests, despite the shortages in other parts of the country, to donate food for relief purposes.

Thousands of prisoners also joined in the effort, skipping meals on January 1 to raise money for food charity.

Still, by January 2, 30 people were reported to have died before food could reach them. The region reported to be most affected by the drought is Kenya’s Northeastern province.

The food shortages had remained largely unreported until local newspapers and television stations carried pictures at Christmas of malnourished children in northeastern Kenya, sparking a Kenyan charity operation and criticisms of the government.

President Mwai Kibaki has since declared the food crisis a national disaster and launched appeals for local and international help. His government says more than 2.5 million Kenyans will need famine relief for the next 6 months due to crop failure and the operation would cost about 11 billion shillings (US\$150 million).

“Food is a basic right for every Kenyan,” said Kibaki in his New Year speech. “My government will therefore spare no effort in ensuring all Kenyans have access to this basic necessity.”

Church



Newly arrived refugees in camp in North Darfur

Civilian deaths almost double in Darfur, Annan says

NAIROBI (IRIN) – At the end of the year, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that the security situation in Darfur continued to deteriorate, leading to nearly a doubling of confirmed civilian deaths.

In his latest monthly report on the conflict in the western Sudanese region, he called it a "deeply disturbing trend" with "devastating effects on the civilian population".

Reports from the ground confirmed the marked deterioration in the situation since September, he said, with confirmed civilian deaths rising from 70 in October to 120 in November.

"Civilians continue to pay an intolerably high price as a result of recurrent fighting by warring parties, the renewal of the scorched earth tactics by militia and massive military action by the government," he said in the report released on December 29.

"Large-scale attacks against civilians continue, women and girls are being raped by armed groups, yet more villages are being burned, and thousands more are being driven from their homes," he added.

He said militia attacks on villages southwest of Gereida in South Darfur in the beginning of November, which resulted in numerous deaths and the displacement of at least 15,000 people, were a "shocking indication" of the government's continuing failure to protect its own population.

"The vast majority of armed militia have not been disarmed, and no major steps have been taken by the government to bring to justice

or even identify any of the militia leaders or the perpetrators of attacks, contributing to a prevailing climate of impunity," he said.

"I strongly urge the government of the Sudan once again to take decisive steps to address these manifest failures," he added. Annan said humanitarian agencies and NGOs in Darfur had responded to the sizeable new displacements, but had struggled to maintain their "massive operation" in the face of high levels of insecurity.

He said in October nearly three million people – half the Darfur population – received food aid and countless lives had been saved. Those most exposed to violence and gross violations of human rights, however, continued to live in fear and terror.

Ultimately, only a political solution could bring an end to the violence, he said, adding that the current round of peace talks in the Nigerian capital of Abuja was critical and needed to be decisive.

The Darfur conflict erupted in February 2003 when the two main rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army and the Justice and Equality Movement, took up arms to fight what they called the discrimination and oppression of the region by the government. The government is accused of unleashing militia – known as the Janjawid – on civilians in an attempt to quash the rebellion.

Some 3.4 million people continue to be affected by the conflict, according to the UN, of whom 1.8 million are internally displaced and 200,000 have fled to neighboring Chad.

A Testimony to Ukraine's Parliament

Alan Doerksen

FORT ERIE, ON (CANS) – Recently, Kristin Savina, a girl from Father's House Centre of Social Care, spoke before the Parliament of Ukraine. Her speech was a powerful testimony of the work Father's House has done to change her life and the lives of hundreds of other street children in wonderful ways.

Father's House is an indigenous Christian ministry to children based in Ukraine that is assisted by Christian Aid Mission.



Kristina Savina, 14, speaks to Ukraine parliament

"My name is Kristin; I'm 14 years old," she told Parliament. "For the last 10 months I have lived in Father's House Centre. For two and a half years I lived on the streets. I had to spend nights in basements, shelters, and sometimes in the open air. After life in my family, where my mom and dad drank alcohol all the time, living on the street seemed to be better, but very soon it turned to hell for me.

"I sniffed glue, smoked cigarettes and drank alcohol, damaging my health. I would beg for food and money to survive. Many of my friends became thieves. Some even turned to prostitution. People around us treated us differently – some with compassion, some with hatred and contempt, and others tried not to notice us at all.

"People would say that we are

the dregs of the society, disturbing other people, and that we have no future but in prison. Unfortunately, two of my friends are in prison now, indeed. Another friend of mine, who is only 16 now, gave birth to a child and abandoned him. I was taken to the state shelter 20 times, but each time I ran away. "I don't know what would have happened to me if Father's House workers had not found me. They showed me the love I dreamed about all my life. Now I'm happy, study at school, go to church, and have many wonderful friends. A lot of opportunities are open before me.

"I'd like you to take my word, from one who represents those children who still live on the street and dream about a happy childhood. We are normal kids like any other children. I'm the same as the children in your families. I

want to love and be loved.

"Turn to us not only your eyes, but your hearts, too. Treat us as your own children and give us a little bit of your love. We have the future. We will grow up and you will be proud of us. Do not forget about us!"

Praise God that Father's House has not forgotten about children such as Kristin.

Christian Aid News Service. Christian Aid Mission was founded in Canada and the USA in 1953 as a Christian foreign missions board. Its purpose is to aid indigenous evangelical Christianity overseas and evangelize and disciple among the multicultural community in North America. From Canada, the mission assists over 100 indigenous projects taking place in more than 50 nations worldwide.

For more information please contact Alan Doerksen, Editor.



The children of Father's House

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Islamization by stealth

Harry Antonides

Either Islam gets Europeanized, or Europe gets Islamized.
Bassam Tibi, *Weekly Standard*, October 4, 2004

The most important battle in the war for Muslim minds during the next decade will be fought not in Palestine or Iraq [but] on the outskirts of London, Paris, and the other European cities, where Islam is already a growing part of the West.

Giles Kepel, *Atlantic Monthly*, January-February 2005

There exists in this country a double standard with respect to freedom of speech and religion. Recent events have shown that Christians are judged much more harshly than others. Here I want to focus especially on how this difference affects Christians compared to Muslims.

The distinguished historian Bernard Lewis's recent observations about this difference are remarkably forthright. In the course of a *Wall Street Journal* interview, he observed that militant Islam is dangerously expanding its influence in Europe. He said that in some respects Islam is already taking over: "You see that in many ways. Already the Muslim religion enjoys an immunity from criticism that Christianity has lost and Judaism never had. In this Christian West it is much safer to criticize Christian values than Muslim values."

Double standards

The evidence of such double standards is everywhere. Ironically, this is occurring despite legislation that makes it a crime to give offence to any identifiable group or individual. Intent or even truth does not matter. If a person or a certain specified group feels offended, then the offence giver is liable to prosecution. But that does not apply to Christians; they can safely be attacked, ridiculed – or even muzzled. Let me describe one such instance of double standards.



Dr. Chris Kempling

Dr. Chris Kempling is an experienced teacher and counselor in British Columbia, employed by the Quesnel School Board. He first ran into trouble in 2002, when he was given a one-month suspension by the B.C. College of Teachers, who declared him guilty of conduct unbecoming a member of this College.

His offence had nothing to do with his performance in the classroom. But he had written letters and one column in the local newspaper explaining why he was opposed to promoting the homosexual agenda in the classroom. He provided information about known facts regarding promiscuity, rate of infection, and certain negative social and psychological effects. He explained that he would not teach anything that would conflict with his Christian conviction.

He had not expressed these views in the classroom but only in a public forum that should be wide open for the free expression of various, even conflicting, opinions. But he found out differently.

Kempling's professional union the B.C. Teachers Federation at first offered some legal help, but later refused to assist him. Its president explained: "His views are antithetical to our position about the inclusion of gays, lesbians, transgendered and two-spirited people in our society."

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association similarly declined to help. Its president declared, "If there are any gay students in that school – and you can bet your bottom dollar that there are – they're going to keep their heads down and they certainly are not going to resort to Mr. Kempling for advice."

But Kempling's troubles were not over. His appeal of the B.C. College of Teachers' ruling to the B.C. Supreme Court was turned down in February 2004. He explained that this ruling meant that teachers would not be able to express their own opinions to their supervisors, or write privately to their own members of Parliament, or even critically discuss the topic of homosexuality in postgraduate research papers. He called this "an unacceptable restriction of freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and freedom of intellectual expression."

Kempling next appealed to the B.C. Court of Appeal, and in June 2005 it also ruled against him, saying that it did not matter that no harm was proved. It even went so far as to declare that writing critically in a research paper about homosexuality is a form of discrimination. Kempling has now appealed the decision of this Court to the Supreme Court of Canada. If the latter court decides to hear this appeal, this case may not be adjudicated till 2007.

In April 2005 the Quesnel School Board imposed a three-month suspension without pay on Kempling. This time his offence was that he had publicly expressed his disagreement with the Liberal government's same-sex marriage legislation. Subsequently, he was again called on the carpet for traveling to Ottawa to testify before Bill C-38 (same-sex "marriage") committee, despite the fact that this parliamentary committee invited Kempling and even paid his expenses.

Now consider how this blatant assault on Mr. Kempling's constitutional freedom of speech, and his right to work without harassment, contrasts with the kid glove treatment meted out to Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, head of the Canadian Islamic Congress. He is also a professor of computer engineering at the University of Waterloo.

Defending the Indefensible

While a guest on the *Michael Coren Live TV* show on October 19, 2004, Elmasry justified the Palestinian terrorist attacks on all Israelis above age 18, even civilians, whether male or female. Later in an interview with the *Globe and Mail* he reiterated: "Israel has a people's army and a draft and therefore they should be considered legitimate targets. They are part of the occupying power, and Palestinians consider them targets for suicide bombers as well as other means." He then explained that suicide bombing is a technique born of desperation. "It's not for me to say if it's okay or not. In the final analysis, it has done more harm than good."

When his callous remarks met with public anger, he said that he had merely stated the Palestinians' position, not his own. His "apology" amounted to a regret that his audience had misunderstood him and that he had not mentioned his conviction that killing civilians is "an immoral act of the worst kind" and that this failure was the "the biggest mistake in my 30 years of public life."

Note that in his "apology" he retracts nothing since originally he had singled out all adults above 18, eligible for military service. They are thus legitimate targets for the Palestinian terrorists, in distinction from the civilian population, that is, all Israelis below the age of 18.

The human rights establishment did not discipline Elmasry. There were no formal charges laid against this high-profile representative of the Muslim community, nor was his position at the university in danger.

On the contrary, the other CIC board members, rather than calling their president to task, rallied to his defence and confirmed his suitability for the leadership of their Congress. Elmasry continues to serve as their vociferous spokesman on their website and in occasional newspaper columns to lecture us non-Muslims to be more tolerant and understanding of the religion he represents.

The difference between the punitive treatment meted out



Dr. Mohamed Elmasry

to the Christian Chris Kempling and the deference shown to the Muslim Mohamed Elmasry is symptomatic of the double standard referred to by Bernard Lewis. A similar incoherence is evident in the response of a major Canadian bank to a complaint by a Muslim organization purporting to be the Canadian voice of Islam. That story is worth retelling.

Cowardice in high places

The Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) states that it "is committed to educating Canadians and empowering Canadian Muslims through various publications, seminars and media kits."

In fact, it is preoccupied with what it perceives 'to be the erosion of civil rights in Canada, especially of Muslims. It is ever vigilant in exposing instances of alleged injustices inflicted on Muslims, by keeping a close eye on all the media, government agencies, businesses, universities and other institutions for signs of such offences

Last year CAIR-CAN decided to teach the mighty Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce a lesson in religious sensitivity, which from its point of view was an overwhelming success.

CIBC's chief economist Jeffrey Rubin produces a monthly research report on economic trends intended for its top investment clients. In his April 5, 2005 report he referred to restrictions on the global oil production. In that context, he wrote: "This time around there won't be any tap that some appeased mullah or sheik can suddenly turn back on."

He did not know that this remark would catch the attention of the watchful CAIR-CAN sensitivity specialists. But they did, and its executive director Riad Saloojee informed CIBC's Brian Shaw: "We are gravely concerned that Mr. Rubin is promoting stereotyping of Muslims and Arabs in a CIBC publication.... We request that Mr. Rubin and CIBC World Markets issue a letter of apology and undergo sensitization training regarding Muslims and Arabs."

The bank immediately buckled under, so that less than three weeks after the appearance of the offending statement, Mr. Shaw wrote to the CAIR-CAN executive director:

First let me state that we take the concerns expressed in your letter very seriously. While the comments were in no way intentional or meant to offend anyone in the Muslim or Arab community, we agree that, in hindsight, the comments were insensitive. We have taken immediate steps to address this issue.

We have reviewed all aspects of the matter with Jeff Rubin and will be providing him with training to ensure that this situation does not occur again in the future. In addition, Jeff has withdrawn the research report from the World Markets website, redrafted the paragraph in question and reposted the amended report back to the website.

Those immediate steps amounted to shamelessly throwing Mr. Rubin to the wolves. Instead of insisting on the CIBC's right of free speech and defending the integrity of

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one of its top employees, it made him undergo a two-hour sensitization training, for which it shelled out the sum of about \$5000, according to Margaret Wente of the *Globe and Mail*, ("Rubin's Humiliating Fate no Surprise," August 27, 2005.)

The fact is that Mr. Rubin's offhand remark reflected the truth that in some major Middle Eastern oil producers, including Saudi Arabia and Iran, Muslim clerics are the leading authorities. It's noteworthy that CAIR-CAN's letter did not dispute the accuracy of Mr. Rubin's claim. It declared him to be guilty of *stereotyping*—the sin that has now been elevated (or should that be downgraded?) to the ultimate evil in this otherwise sinless multicultural Paradise.

Instead of sending their groveling letter, no doubt composed by their risk-averse lawyers, this is the one the CIBC should have written:

Dear Mr. Riad Saloojee:

We appreciate your interest in our organization's publications in which we provide our clients with professional advice regarding world economic trends.

We regret that you have taken offence at comments contained in a report by one of our professional economists, Mr. Jeffrey Rubin. We must however decline your request to discipline Mr. Rubin and to apologize for the sentence to which you object.

Instead, we insist on our right to free speech and that of our employees as they perform their duties to our satisfaction.

We have nothing but the highest regard for Mr. Rubin's professional competence and performance. And we have no intention of besmirching his outstanding employment record.

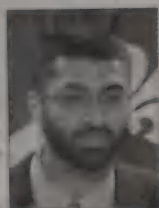
We insist that Canada is a free country in which we are at liberty to carry on our business within the boundaries of the law and the norms of civility.

Instead of finding fault where no offence is intended, you might pay more attention to those who in the name of your religion, such as Osama bin Laden, have declared war on our country and are engaged in a campaign of terrorism in various parts of the world. You might also be well advised to become better acquainted with the sort of freedoms that have made this country great, rather than, as you now do consistently, focus on the alleged threats to the civil rights of Muslim believers.

The offending sentence simply expressed the fact that in some major Islam-ruled oil producing countries, Muslim clergy have ultimate authority, including over political and economic issues. Our letter made no judgment about that fact.

However, we are not in the business of debating complex theological issues, and have no intention of discussing this further. We consider this matter closed.

Sincerely,
CIBC World Markets.



Riad Saloojee, executive director, Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Magnolia trees

Christopher Devince

We sometimes live in a pretend land, where we make up solutions to our problems, which are not solutions, but remedies for immediate sadness.

When I feel a sense of distress, I walk to a magnolia tree across town. It sits on the front grounds of a stranger's house. At first I did not even know it was a magnolia tree. I always assumed such trees belonged in the Civil War south, somewhere between Virginia and Tennessee.

We create, in our imagination, a seasonal identity: New England belongs to autumn and winter. Texas belongs to the wide range and sun. California pretends to be the state of youth, imagination and perpetual August.

I walk along the avenue of this little town where I live, imagining how it once looked ribboned with dirt roads and horse-drawn carriages until I step up to my magnolia tree. When I feel weak and less confident, I speak to the great tree and introduce myself as Antaeus the giant who gains strength with his two feet planted in the solid ground. I make excuses for my loss of self, define my exhaustion as symptoms of my stress-filled life, or an apology for my aging body that I did not once carry with me. Youth does not carry a body along.

A magnolia tree in winter is a frail collection of twisted branches. I pull up the collar of my coat to my neck and speak to the tree in my self-made language: "I no longer wish to see you old tree, tree that is bent and gnarled and so easily brought to submission by the cold and wind."

I walk home, determined not to give this tree any sense that I came for its solace.

I am partial to shade, though. I like walking under the tree in the summer, when the sun is hot and the leaves of the great magnolia spread out like the fans of the geisha girls. The street is less hot there and the semblance of lushness is defined in the pillows of shade that I imagine sometimes are for my comfort.

I like speaking about the mountains that surround my house when I am with my tree. I call them mountains, but in reality they are the Ramapo hills, worn down to smooth shapes from centuries of wind and erosion, but still pronounced and feminine.

The spring pools that I see along the way to the tree that I admire define the rainfall. In the deep summer there is less and less water. In the spring and fall, the pools are filled to capacity. I sometimes consider taking off my clothes and jumping into the clean water, but I live in a town filled with houses, stores, and automobiles zooming back and forth. There is no place for a person to swim nude with the water blues.

So I read novels,

write poetry, and slide along the moon's edge at night when I look out my window just before I sleep.

The magnolia tree grows in silence. It is much like us, spreading out in our waking moments when we are filled with a desire to seek out a landscape of life. As the tree shoulders its way into the sunlight, so we, too, become less stiff in the heat, like the sticky butterfly emerging from the gel of the chrysalis into the dry air.

I once felt that I ought to shun dreams. I sometimes felt that they were too vivid, or too misguided, or too erotic, or too egocentric, or impossible to attain. But then I saw bridges, pyramids, Rubens's nudes, Archibald MacLiesh's poems. If we avoid our waking dreams, we fill our life with regular death and routine.

I'd rather imagine a floating castle than deride a castle with wings and define it as nonsense. I'd rather acknowledge the existence of beauty than cover the canvas of life with a tarpaulin. Perhaps what we imagine is a hint of what will someday be, and such suggestions are to be felt as a symphony, or the center of a novel, or under the spreading branches of a magnolia tree. Such dreams must be good.

So why the blossoms, I ask my tree sometimes when I walk in an afternoon of solitude. Why are we given, once a year, the tapestry of blossoms embroidered against the sky? Why the aroma of magnolia blossoms? I believe, sometimes, in the scent of certitude. Now and again an unexpected wave of conviction floats around me, like a sudden recognition of perfume or cry of the robin.

There are, for me, answers in the magnolia blossoms: hope constricted in a bud, color and beauty emerging from the slight movement of the petals, and a moment's tribute to a man standing on the street. It must be good.

I return from the tree in the late afternoons, nod my head at the supple pools of water, wave at the distant hills, even dare to whistle as the robin whistles, and create, in my dreams once again, a place that is lined with magnolia trees in bloom.

I choose not to live a life avoiding waking dreams.



This is not a mere tempest in a teapot. It is another skirmish in the fight between an aggressive, intolerant form of Islam eager to replace our historic freedoms and institutions with what the Koran teaches about the rule of Allah. The problem is that our elite tends to go AWOL. I suspect that is because it does not know what is at the core of its own tradition that is good and honorable and worth defending.

Renowned scholar Bernard Lewis, 88, referred to at the start of this article, is one of the West's best informed and prolific authorities on Arabia and Islam. He recently shocked his readers with the prediction that given current trends Europe will be under Islamic rule before the end of this century. In light of similar trends implicit in the three incidents described here, I wonder whether he also should have included Canada in that forecast.

Harry Antonides
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Mental health

The reign of the therapeutic

Albert Mohler

Something's going on at *The Los Angeles Times*. On New Year's Day, the paper ran not one, but two articles questioning America's therapeutic culture and addiction to the latest psychological or psychiatric fads. When a major American newspaper publishes two articles in one issue making this essential point, we ought to take notice.

In "Psychiatry's Sick Compulsion: Turning Weaknesses into Diseases," psychiatrist and philosopher Irwin Savodnik of UCLA argues that his own field of psychiatry is infected with a preoccupation that focuses on illusory diseases. Referring to the holiday season, Savodnik explains that the American Psychiatric Association [APA] has now identified a new disease — seasonal affective disorder, or SAD — and this may explain why some people feel depressed, frustrated, or elated during and after the Christmas season.

"As Americans rush to return Christmas junk, bumping into each other in Macy's and Best Buy, the psychiatric association ponders its latest iteration of feeling bad for the holidays," Savodnik informs. "And what is the association selling? Mental illness. With its panoply of major depression, dysthymic disorder, bipolar disorder and generalized anxiety disorder, the association is waving its . . . Flag to remind everyone that amid all the celebration, all the festivities, all the exuberance, many people will 'come down with' or 'contract' or 'develop' some variation of depressive illness."

The diseasing of America

What Savodnik describes is part and parcel of what many observers identify as the diseasing of America. Problems large and small, real and imagined are packaged as new diseases to be treated with everything from seminars to pharmaceuticals.

Irwin Savodnik is a well-known critic of modern psychiatry. Last year, he traced what he saw as positive developments in Russian psychiatry, even as he lamented that his colleagues in America are "moving in exactly the opposite direction." As he explained: "For the better part of the 20th century, psychiatry was dominated by psychoanalysis, so much that in the public eye the two were nearly synonymous. Five-day-a-week-on-the-couch treatment was de rigueur. Psychoanalysts authored most of the prominent textbooks in the field. Gradually, though, psychoanalysis, under attack from some sectors of the intellectual community, perceived as too expensive and unscientific, began to lose its grip on the psychiatric community."

Abandoning psychoanalysis, American psychiatrists turned to drugs. "In the past 30 years," Savodnik suggests, "the overriding ideology of American psychiatry has shifted to a biological model. Psychopharmacology has become its therapeutic backbone."



◀ I'm afraid I have the Winter Teeth Chatter Syndrome, Doc. Couldn't you just prescribe four months of beach-and-sun and send the bill to medicare?

Shyness as disease

In his most recent article, Savodnik points to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM-IV], published by the APA. He warns that ads have recently appeared in psychiatric journals proposing that shyness be diagnosed as a new "syndrome" that will be soon on its way to becoming a disease. Savodnik bets that the next edition of the DSM-IV will include shyness as a disease.

"As it turns out, the association has

The overselling of personal empowerment or "the hyping of hope" replaces personal responsibility and achievement with the illusion of self-worth based upon nothing at all.

been inventing mental illnesses for the last 50 years or so," Savodnik recounts. "The original diagnostic manual appeared in 1952 and contained 107 diagnoses and 132 pages, by my count. The second edition burst forth in 1968 with 180 diagnoses and 119 pages. In 1980, the association produced a 494-page tome with 226 conditions. Then, in 1994, the manual exploded to 886 pages and 365 conditions, representing a 340 percent increase in the number of diseases over 42 years."

Are we actually to believe that Americans are now afflicted with 258 "conditions" that did not even exist (or were absolutely unknown) in 1952?

Everyone afflicted

A quick look through the DSM-IV will reveal that almost every living human being is afflicted with one or more of the "conditions" described in this encyclopedia of mental and emotional problems. More

than anything else, this just goes to prove the adage of the psychotherapeutic industry — you are either in therapy or in denial.

Most tellingly, Savodnik understands that more is at stake here than the professional concerns of psychiatry. His field, he acknowledges, "is a leading indicator, a barometer of social practice and political change."

Political change is a big part of the equation. As Savodnik wrote in *The Los Angeles Times*, "It's a natural step from using social and political standards to create a psychiatric diagnosis to using them to influence public policy." Savodnik's acknowledgement that politics plays such a big part in the development and diagnosis of psychiatric disorders is itself remarkable.

Pathology has displaced morality

The "triumph of the therapeutic" so well described by Philip Reiff discounts personal responsibility and flies in the face of the Christian worldview. "Pathology has replaced morality," Savodnik asserts. "Treatment has supplanted punishment. Imprisonment is now hospitalization. From the moral self-castigation we find in the writings of John Adams we have been drawn to Woody Allen-style neuroses. Were the psychiatric association to scrutinize itself more deeply and reconsider its expansionist diagnostic programs, it would, hopefully, make a positive contribution to our culture by not turning the good and bad into the healthy and the sick."

The self-esteem industry

In essence, Savodnik's article is a shot fired across the bow of his own chosen profession. But *The Los Angeles Times* also published a second article on a related theme in the same edition. In "Self-Help's Big Lie," Steve Salerno, author of *SHAM: How the Self-Help Movement Made America Helpless*, argues that the overselling of personal empowerment and

self actualization "may be the great unsung irony of modern American life, destined to disappoint as surely as the pity party that it was meant to replace."

Salerno's target is the self-esteem industry that, he suggests, has "been unambiguously disastrous" for the country. He describes this overselling of personal empowerment — "the hyping of hope" that replaces personal responsibility and achievement with the illusion of self-worth based upon nothing at all.

"Self-esteem-based education presupposed that a healthy ego would help students achieve greatness, even if the mechanisms necessary to instill self-esteem undercut scholarship," Salerno explains. "Over time, it became clear that what such policies promote is not academic greatness but a bizarre disconnect between perceived self-worth and provable skill."

Thus, Salerno blames self-esteem gurus such as Dr. Phil McGraw, Oprah Winfrey, and Tony Robbins for leading the nation astray by promising that self-esteem is the tonic for all problems. Salerno cites management consultant Jay Kurtz, who argues: "The most dangerous person in corporate America is the highly enthusiastic incompetent. He's running faster in the wrong direction, doing horribly counterproductive things with a winning enthusiasm."

Savodnik and Salerno write from a basically secular worldview. In their own way, each sees the modern therapeutic industry as a self-deluding mechanism for inventing illusory diseases, medicalizing problems with psychotropic drugs, and deluding Americans into thinking that their problems have nothing to do with their own personal responsibility and moral actions.

Christians understand an even deeper problem with the therapeutic industry and the self-esteem fad. As human beings, we cannot possibly understand ourselves by merely observing ourselves and our fellow humans. We are not autonomous creatures and our worth is not rooted in our own existence, or in any skill or quality we may possess or develop.

Instead, we find our worth in the knowledge that we are made in the image of God, and we find our health only in knowing him and honoring him. Of course, this is made possible only through the redemptive work of Christ, who willingly assumed human flesh and went to the cross as a demonstration of humility, not vainglorious self-esteem.

As psychiatrist Paul Vitz reminds, "self-esteem is a deeply secular concept." The essence of the Christian worldview is not self-esteem, but human dignity. But then, a confident belief in human dignity, and a dismissal of the cult of self-esteem, may soon show up as a "disease" in a forthcoming edition of the mental health manuals.

Entertainment

The network and Daniel Webster

Harry der Nederlanden

The pilot of a new television drama centring on an Episcopal priest aired on NBC Sunday, January 8. It was being pilloried by evangelicals in the U.S. even before it appeared. Many charged that it was out to make a mockery of the Christian faith. I don't believe that was its intent; it succeeded instead mostly in making a laughingstock of itself.

Evangelicals perhaps were a little miffed by the supposition that Jesus would choose to drop in on a liberal Episcopal priest for periodic chats rather than on a Baptist pastor.

The central protagonist of the new show "The Book of Daniel" is a harried Episcopalian priest named Daniel Webster, and to call it issue centred is an understatement. The first episode took on more "issues" in one hour than most soaps tackle in one season. The only issues it missed were abortion and vegetarianism, and I'm sure that they're on the list for the next episode (assuming there is one).

The show is called "The Book of Daniel," but it has no connection whatsoever with the Old Testament book of that name. In fact, it has little connection with either Testament. The priest displays little or no familiarity with Scripture or Christian theology, and the Jesus who visits him displays even less interest in either Christian teachings or Christian behavior. He's a hippy Jesus and his primary reason for being in the show is to embody the one virtue everyone still extols — a bemused, almost detached, tolerance of human frailty.

And he has plenty of human frailties to bemuse him in this first episode. The priest Daniel Webster (a pointless allusion to the story "The devil and Daniel Webster") is blessed with a family that exhibits enough hang-ups and issues to keep an entire team of therapists (and screenwriters) busy 40 hours a week. Each character is a type of some current social issue: the drug-selling daughter, the gay son, the adopted (Chinese) son who is a womaniser, the self-centred, shallow wife, the overbearing father, the mother with Alzheimer's, the unfaithful brother-in-law, and so on.

The daughter is selling drugs to finance her artistic ambitions. She has little or no sense of right and wrong, and she feels terribly inconvenienced when she is sentenced to community service after she's caught. While on the work crew, she connives with a co-worker to commit Internet piracy.

Her priest Daddy never tells her that it is wrong to sell drugs — just that it's stupid. If this were presented by way of satire, that is, to show the priest's shallowness, it might pass, but this is apparently the highest level of moral and theological insight that he can muster. It's supposed to pass as wisdom.

Pastor Daniel doesn't come away without faults, however. To demonstrate how blind adults can be to their own failings, Pastor Daniel is shown tossing back pain pills as

if they were peanuts. Every other time he appears on screen, he shakes out a few pills from his inexhaustible bottle. The writers want to be sure that we, the somewhat dim-witted audience, will not miss this bit of parental hypocrisy.

The hypocrisy is deepened when Daniel's bishop, a right-wing Margaret Thatcher type, asks him to share a few. She has headaches too. One gets the impression that the entire hierarchy of the Episcopal Church functions on pain-pills instead of biblical theology. We can tell this female bishop is a right-winger, not because she refutes Daniel with biblical doctrine, but because she berates him for being far too generous on the pulpit with forgiveness. After all, everyone knows that right-wingers don't believe in forgiveness.

Filmmakers usually hire consultants on matters where some expertise is required,

such as period costume and historical accuracy. But if the makers of this series hired a theological consultant, he (or she) must have been tripping on pain-pills.

The Pastor's two sons are opposites. One is gay and gentle. Mama encourages him to go to med school so he can find a handsome doctor to pair up with. The other son is Chinese; he's adopted (multicultural theme). He is brash, heterosexual, and loves to taunt his gay brother. All he seems to have on his mind is making sexual conquests. In his second on-screen appearance he is committing statutory rape by having sex with an underage girl, the daughter of another clergyman — Daniel's immediate superior. The next time, he propositions his adopted sister.

And this is just the beginning. There is much, much more in the same vein, one issue after another, as if the writers have a

list and they are checking it twice to be sure they will miss no human vice. Packed into this one episode: the self-centred wife and mother; the brother-in-law who embezzles church funds and absconds with the church secretary; the cold, overbearing father (also a priest); the superior who is a purely managerial type concerned only about appearances; and, of course, not least, a vapid Jesus who'd make Oprah look like a genius.

Jesus does utter one pearl of wisdom, one that Pastor Daniel quotes at the funeral of his brother-in-law: "Life is hard — that's why there's such a nice reward at the end of it." A saying to embroider in silk and frame for posterity.

The episode does come to a dramatic climax undoubtedly inspired by "Desperate Housewives." In the middle of the funeral, *Continued on page 14...*

New Year treats

Maynard van der Galien

Pickled herring, oliebollen and advokaat are Dutch treats still enjoyed to ring in the New Year.

All around the world people celebrate the dawn of a New Year with parties and feasting. People everywhere, hoping for health and prosperity in the New Year, eat foods that are considered to be lucky, or, a traditional food or treat that's eaten as they ring in the New Year.

People of Dutch descent are known to eat oliebollen, pickled herring and advokaat. I rang in the New Year enjoying a snack of all three favorites.

Oliebollen can best be described as a Dutch donut without the hole in the centre. You dip them in icing sugar before eating them. It's great with coffee, tea or something stronger.

Advokaat is a creamy custard with a kick, or a potent pudding that's rich and alcoholic. Advokaat is not for kids. It's made with 12 eggs, sugar, vanilla sugar and ¾ (or one) litre bottle of alcohol. My sister makes it.

If you're not from European descent, you won't like pickled herring. I don't know why that is. Max, my cottage neighbor, is from Polish descent. We were chatting about festive treats the other day. Max said he loves pickled herring, as do the Polish and German people he knows, but his wife, who is not European, dislikes it as do most Canadians.

Making pickled herring is a tradition in our family. Just before Christmas I made a batch, which we enjoyed on New Year's Eve, New Year's Day and the rest of the week. I'll make a few more this winter. Pickled herring can be eaten anytime. I love it on home-made bread.

The best tasting herring I've eaten was in Denmark two years ago. We were in Copenhagen and stopped for lunch at a hotel that specializes in fish. It was a smorgasbord buffet and we were hungry. Many different varieties of fish were there for our enjoyment. The herring was fresh, sweet and so delicious.

I know, I know, Dutch herring is the best!

Let's look at some other traditional foods eaten around the world on New Year's Day.

In Norway adults start the day with various kinds of pickled herring.

Eating pickled herring as the first bite of the New Year brings good luck to those of Polish descent.

German folklore says eating herring at the stroke of midnight will bring luck for the next year. They eat sauerkraut with pork on New Year's Day for good luck.

Eating noodles at midnight is customary at Buddhist temples in Japan.

In Spain and Cuban it is traditional to eat 12 grapes at the stroke of midnight. The grapes signify the 12 months of the year.

Many Italians eat a sweet cake in the shape of a snake on New Year's Day.

Boiled cod is a New Year's Eve must in Denmark.

In the southern U.S., some believe eating black-eyed peas on New Year's Eve will bring good luck for the coming year. And eating greens such as cabbage, kale or spinach is supposed to bring wealth, as is eating cornbread.

The custom of eating greens can be found in other cultures as well, although the cabbage can take many forms, such as sauerkraut, fried cabbage or slaw. Eating greens (a fermented cabbage dish) is a common New Year custom in Vietnam.

Korean people normally eat Rice Cake soup on New Year's Day.

Dumplings are a traditional food in northern China.

Black-eyed peas, fish, apples and beets are eaten for luck at the Jewish New Year's celebration (not celebrated on Jan. 1).

In the Philippines, it is important to have food on the table at midnight in order to ensure an abundance of food in the upcoming year.

In Iran, grains of wheat and barley are sprouted in water to symbolize new life and a special meal is prepared for New Year's Day.

Hope you enjoyed your New Year's traditional treats. I hope 2006 will be equally prosperous and I would like to extend my wishes for health and happiness to everyone.



Maynard van der Galien owns and operates The Old Towne Hall Restaurant and Tea Room in downtown Renfrew, Ont.

Ecclesiastes

Why are we never satisfied

A. A. van Ruler 24

A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded. Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man—even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place?

Ecclesiastes 6: 3-6 (NIV)

To enjoy the good and to be satisfied by it—this is what life is all about. In this passage the Preacher returns to his theme once again with a new emphasis.

He poses an imaginary and extreme case. Suppose someone has a hundred children, he says. Having numerous children is a great benefit in the entire Old Testament. Children are a blessing from the Lord, and many children a great blessing. Life is good, better than death, and having many children is to have life in abundance.

So let's push that to the extreme, says the Preacher, and imagine someone who has a hundred children. That's no small achievement, not even at a time when a man could have many wives. But the Preacher is just speaking hypothetically.

He expands his hypothetical example even further. Suppose the man lives to a ripe old age. Once again, he resorts to hyperbole: suppose he lives a thousand years twice over. That's impossible, of course. Even the patriarchs before the flood did not live to see one thousand years. But the Preacher is pushing his case to the limits and asks us to imagine a case in which someone lives to be a thousand twice over.

Yet, no matter how much the man enjoys of the good, he is never satisfied. He always wants more. His life is an endless pursuit of the good things of this earth. He is out to try everything. He casts his net far and wide. But at the end of his life he is all alone. He has alienated all his children and his friends so that he doesn't even get a proper burial.

Or it could also be that in spite of all that

he has enjoyed, his heart remains a huge, gaping hole. This is hardly out of the realm of possibility. We are not easily satisfied. There is an eternal hunger and restlessness in the human heart. The good things of life and of this world cannot satisfy that hunger, no matter how many we may accrue. They do not fill that emptiness. Strange but true.

It's as if we are not actually destined and suited for this life and for this world. Are we perhaps destined for another life, another world? Can we be satisfied only by God and eternity?

Many philosophers and many religions have claimed as much, and even many Christians have said so.

Yet, I don't think that this is what the Preacher means to say. Or at any rate there is nothing in his words here that points in that direction. On the contrary, he is content to point out that the man in his imaginary example enjoys everything—lots of children and an incredibly long life—and even this is not enough to satisfy him.

He adds that a stillborn child is better off than such a man, for at least the child is nothing from the beginning and quickly disappears. It doesn't even have a name and has never lived, so at least it has rest. But the unsatisfied man of our example cannot find rest. So it is better to be stillborn than to be such a person. It is better not to be born than to be born and to be forever unsatisfied and empty.

So there is no suggestion here that life and this world are lacking, that they don't measure up to our humanity, and that we are destined for something else. On the contrary, human beings are emphatically destined for this life and this world. We should be able to enjoy them. In fact, they should be able to satisfy us. This is precisely what is so tragic—that often we are not able to do so. It is this that makes life empty and meaningless. This is why the Preacher says a stillborn is better off than such a person.

So the Preacher's lament issues from a deep love for life and this world. They are good things that we should be able to enjoy. The Preacher never abandons this conviction. He is infused with an incred-

two sisters.

Jesus appears at Daniel's side. He chuckles indulgently (graciously?) and says, "You never can tell, can you?"

I can't wait to find out what miracle transformed "Bitch" into Bosom Buddy! (Actually, after reading other reviews, I learned that the two women have established a lesbian relationship. Another issue to be checked off.)

The local channel that aired the pilot program invited two local clergymen to the studio to comment on the show. When both said they enjoyed it, especially because the priest was portrayed as a regular guy, I



ably strong appreciation for reality. For him it does amount to something. It is real, substantive. It is not nothing. It is not a veil for something else that is more real. It is not an illusion. It is true and it is good. And that is why we ought to be able to enjoy it and it ought to satisfy us.

The Preacher stubbornly sticks to this presupposition, and so should we. If we do not, we will understand little or nothing of the Preacher's complaints. In fact, the entire biblical viewpoint would become incomprehensible to us. When we begin to denigrate reality as such, to denounce this life and this world, we are lost. Then we fall

rushed to the bathroom to find my bottle of pain-killers.

Perhaps the series has a chance after all: I suspect that some drug companies might be eager to sponsor it. Tylenol. Ibuprofen. Vicodin.

To be honest, I admit that the show gave my wife and I a lot of laughs—most of them not intended by the writers. It was one of those efforts that is so badly done that it isn't so much offensive as ludicrous. I'd say that it would take a miracle to save this show, but I'm sure that the script writers were already planning one or two. After all, they already have Jesus.

back into the bottomless abyss of paganism, which has never dared to see this life and this world as God's work and as therefore good and holy, resting in his unfathomable goodness. Paganism lacks this biblical appreciation of reality—the appreciation of being as wholly good.

It is only in the context of this fundamental outlook that the fact that we often cannot attain the full enjoyment of being—in the sense that we are fully satisfied by it—is so devastating. It is contrary to how things should be. Aren't this life and this world gifts of God? Aren't they made to be sufficient for us? We too are, after all, creatures of God, aren't we? Why, then, are they not able to satisfy us and make us happy?

This is the question that aggravates the Preacher so deeply. It won't leave him alone. It incites him to profound lament. But he does not provide a solution.

Christian teachings since Paul and Augustine have shed further light on the matter. The fact that we cannot enjoy this world and this life as God's creation, they have said, is due to sin. It is due to our corrupt will. This is a profound answer of great value spiritually, but the Preacher does not come to that insight. All he does is to stare into the darkness of our lot; he does not yet detect in it the light of human fault.

The network ... continued from p.13

the betrayed and widowed sister-in-law goes racing away from the casket screaming, "Bitch! Bitch!" when she spots the sexy secretary who seduced her now deceased hubby driving by for a look-see in a bright red convertible. If the entire show had been done in this mode, as over-the-top satire, it may have had a chance.

But, wait, the episode ends on a note of reconciliation. When Pastor Daniel stops at his distraught sister-in-law's house to deliver a casserole (probably his most profoundly pastoral act), he finds the betrayed wife and the flashy mistress laughing together like

Christian living

Is the church failing divorced people?

Ron Edmondson

"Not one person from that church has ever called me in three years." That was the response from the man I ran into at a store recently. I had heard of the man's divorce and knew that I had not seen him in a while, but the size of the church and my own ministries outside the church would have made it very easy for me to have missed him if he were there. When I told him I had not seen him in a while, (not trying to implicate him for lack of attendance) he proceeded to berate me and the church for our lack of attention to him following his divorce. "I'll never set foot in that church again," the man concluded. Sadly I'm not sure he's setting foot in any church these days.

Little would need to be said to convince people that divorce is now a major problem in the church. Statistics have been telling us for years that the rate of divorce inside the church is relatively the same as outside the church. In addition, there are now more people in families that have experienced divorce than there are families never touched by divorce. One fact is very clear; if the church today wants to reach families for Christ it must learn how to deal with divorced people.

There are no easy answers. As a pastor, I feel it is imperative that we continue to teach biblical truths and never allow our culture to dictate our teachings. On the other hand, we must live within our culture and find ways to reach the people within the context of that culture. In my counseling of people who have experienced divorce, I have learned there are a few things which are imperative for churches who want to continue to reach divorced people.

Don't single out divorce

Most divorced people feel that they are no longer welcome in the church. Many times this feeling is self-induced, but often it is a result of attitudes within the church. When churches single out divorced people as a category they are often left to feel that there is something considered strange about them. Churches shouldn't be afraid to use the term "divorced" by calling it "single again" or some other buzz word, but they shouldn't try to separate divorced people from the mainstream of the church either. Divorced people tell me they are often made to feel dirty in the church, rather than being ministered to with God's grace as any

other person would be.

Minister to both spouses

Often when a couple divorces the church will reach out to one spouse, but not the other, based on which was the most active member, which is the presumed "guilty" party, or which spouse continues to attend church on a regular basis (if either). If a church wants to reach divorced people then it must display love to both parties in a divorce. Both spouses may not be equally receptive to that love and support, but the intent and offer should be clear. The goal should be to reach people for Christ, not to label them as good or bad. Most churches I know treat the "guilty" party as the enemy of the church. There may need to be redemptive actions taken because of sin, but that process is far better and more Biblical than ignoring the person altogether, which is what many churches tend to do. It is important to understand, as well, that there really are two sides to every marriage break-up and usually only one side is the story making the gossip rounds.

Know what you believe and practice it

The doctrinal beliefs of the church should be clearly known and should be carried out consistently. I know one man whose church allowed deacons to be divorced, for example, but didn't want them to serve in any "visible" role. This made him very confused and angry towards the church. Most divorced people understand a church interpreting Scripture in a certain way and can accept that. What people don't understand is when they can't figure out the rules.

Teach biblical truth ... in love

Jesus came full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) Both are necessary for a healthy church that will reach divorced or other hurting people. The church can't pretend divorce is okay, but it shouldn't condemn people because of divorce either. Most people can accept truth far better if they know they are still loved. I know many churches that excommunicate themselves from divorced people; some consciously and purposefully, some unconsciously and by tradition. If a person is "dumped" by a church after a divorce, they are very unlikely to reunite with another church for several years, if ever. I can't imagine Jesus, the friend of sinners, but

When God laughs

What does God laugh at? I'm not referring to the laughter of God in Psalms, where the Lord laughs at the wicked (Psalm 37:13), but rather to when God sees us in humorous situations.

Does he laugh when those who believe they know give due dates for pregnant women? One of the first questions a pregnant woman hears is, "When is the due date?"

The doctor or midwife tells us, "Your baby is due May 24."

May 24 comes. The baby does not.

Sound the alarm: the baby is late!

Aren't due dates for non-believers? The baby is due when God decides. If the baby arrives on May 29, then that was the due date; we just didn't know it.

Does God laugh when we ruin one of the last great remaining surprises in this world, an unborn child's gender, by bouncing enough sound waves off the fetus to produce pictures that reveal the sex - and it ends up being incorrect?

"But we painted the baby's room pink and she's a boy! That's not right!"

I wonder if God laughs then.

I wonder if God laughs or shakes his head when he watches a Christian baseball league team pray with each other before the game and then hears, "Let's kick their butts!" Or when he hears a young boy pray that the Toronto Maple Leafs may win the Stanley Cup. (I was guilty of that when I was 7, not anymore.)

Surely God laughs when Sunday school children answer questions in front of the congregation with pure, unfiltered honesty. A minister was speaking to a number of kids during the children's message at a church that also had a large number of adults with special needs. He held up a rod and a stuffed sheep to show the children that Jesus is our shepherd and we are his sheep. For reasons unknown, he asked

who would have hated divorce as his Father does, ever failing to show love to a divorced person.

Don't ignore the problem

I know many churches that do nothing to address the issue of divorce at all. They don't necessarily reach divorced people, but they don't do anything to stop the trend either. At some point the church needs to become an agent for change in the culture. Churches need to address the issue of divorce, since it is the church that has real answers to the problems of life.

Help build strong marriages

Churches should provide ample opportunities for couples to grow in marriage. Fellowships, Bible studies, and even sermons should reinforce the healthy home environment. I have never met a divorced person who didn't want to have a marriage that worked or that wished divorce on other people. Most people simply don't know how to have a successful

My window seat

Mendel D. Hoekstra



what a sheep eats.

Someone piped up "Liquor!"

Does God laugh when people have children that display the same difficult behavior that those very same parents exhibited when they were young? I know the grandparents do. When my mother sees me struggling to manage my extremely active son, she laughs and tells me that I am getting a taste of my own medicine. I wonder if God is laughing then too.

Does God laugh when passengers are in a mad rush to get off the plane to sprint to the luggage counter to wait 45 minutes for their suitcases? What about when God sees us, made in his image, made to rule over every living creature that moves on the ground, walking our dogs holding their feces in a plastic bag?

When I was a young boy of 10 and I was trying to argue with my sister in my mother's company, my mother kept interrupting us and trying to stop the dispute. Her interruptions became more and more hindering to the progression of our arguing that I said to my mother, "Mom, could you please leave so that we could fight in peace?" Was God laughing then?

My university textbook has a story of a man who was sick and was going to die. This man watched lots of comedy films and he laughed a lot. He actually laughed himself better and was healed. Incredibly he did not die.

Although love is the best medicine, laughter is close behind. May our 2006 be "filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy" (Psalm 126:2).

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marriage. They should be able to learn in the church. Divorced people really are looking for a church that reveres the institution of marriage, while helping them recover from divorce.

Promote pre-marital training

When my son turned 16 years old he had spent about 40 hours in driver's training. In most churches today he will be blessed if he gets ten percent of that time in counseling before marriage. Churches need to require pre-marital training. If the church doesn't have qualified staff or

staff with time to provide the training it should offer to pay for couples to receive counseling. Some churches are now offering pre-marital counseling through mentoring couples who commit to work with the engaged couple and walk through the first year of marriage with the newlyweds, providing an inexpensive, but very effective way to train couples for marriage.

Build healthy Christians

The best defense against divorce in the church is to build healthy
Continued on page 16 ...

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Reflection

Making meaning



Another year has dawned and January is already well on its way. Over Christmas and New Year's we took extra time to reflect on the year gone by and the year to come. We came up with a sum total of this past year. For some of us it was our best year ever, for others our worst.

A year end make us quantify life into graspable, understandable, identifiable and controllable frameworks. It makes us place a value on life as we experienced it. Life was either wonderful because it was full of opportunities or difficult because of pain and sadness and the closing of doors.

We know of course that no life story is fully happy or fully painful. Life is a mixed bag of happiness and pain. What's different each year is the proportion of these two. Some years we feel exceptionally blessed because of specific happy events that took place, such as a marriage, a new job, the birth of a baby or renewed health. Other years we don't feel quite so blessed because of the death of a family member or friend, a diagnosis of terminal illness, the loss of a

personal dream or some other unplanned and difficult event.

However, the reality is that we are never more or less blessed from one year to the next. We are always blessed, no matter what the circumstances. In the big picture of life we know that God's all powerful and overarching love embraces and redeems us each and every day fully, completely and totally, each year again.

Nevertheless, in the smaller picture of life — the human picture as we experience it in this broken world, we do tend to categorize life as either good or bad. Some things are hard and some things are easy. A wedding is joyful and a funeral is sad. A new job is challenging and an old one might be dull. Good health means vitality, ill health means wasting away. Good experiences provide us with energy; bad experiences drain us of energy.

The art of living abundantly in all things good and bad, has something to do with incorporating God's big picture perspective into the smaller framework of our

human reality. We do that not by denying life as we experience it, but by integrating God's picture into that real human life of ours. In other words, by trying to add the realm of God's perspective to it. When we live life fully, with all its joys and sorrows and are able to place it within God's realm, then all of life and all its joys and sorrows, is transformed into something very good.

Wayne Dyers, author of numerous books on living life to its fullest, writes about three levels of consciousness we as human beings experience in our journey to become the persons God intended us to be. These levels are: ego consciousness, group consciousness, and mystical consciousness.

The first level of consciousness is about our selfish desires and need to live up to the expectations of other people. In our human development we all experience this level at some point in our lives. In the end, it results in anxiety due to our inability to keep up with the expectations we place on ourselves.

The second level is much the

same as the first except that it extends to and includes other people. We try hard to meet the needs of the people around us, as well as our own. According to Dyer, this level of conscious living only leads to closed group mentalities, war and other ways of social destruction. We eventually run stuck in our efforts and striving to meet each other's needs and start fighting to defend our personal or our group's point of view. Examples of life expressed at this level of consciousness are splits and divisions within groups of like-minded people.

Dyer states that we cannot solve problems with the same mind that has created them, so we need to change. This change, or personal growth, forces us into the third and highest level of consciousness. At this level of mystical consciousness we move beyond ourselves and our individual needs to become connected to every individual and every creature on the entire planet, and to God. At this level, all things meet and are connected and there is no competition between gender, race or religion and there are no subgroups. There are also no patriots of any one country. Instead everyone is a sojourner in a country that has a wide and global awareness. Here we know that harm directed at other people only harms ourselves. This is where hatred is dissolved by love and sadness is transformed into joy.

Living in mystical awareness for us as Christian means living a spirit filled life. It means living with the mind of Christ and to live and move and express our being in ways that reflect the Holy Spirit in our hearts. It is about knowing who we are before God and living out of that knowledge by loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. It also means having the grace to move beyond the boxes of our traditions and cultures into a greater awareness of the bigger universal plan of God, and to serve in it.

There are many examples of people who transcended to a third level of consciousness. These people discovered meaning in life beyond themselves and their circumstances. One person who comes to mind is Viktor Frankl, who survived his concentration camp experience by trusting that a greater power and meaning was at work in his suffering. He later wrote books about the meaning of suffering and founded a school of

therapy called logotherapy. When we try to discover the meaning of our life experiences, both the good and the difficult, we make sense of it and change through it. We grow to become the person we were meant to be. People who have achieved a level of mystical consciousness know how to be a blessing in a broken world.

I know ordinary people who have risen to a level of higher consciousness in the midst of their difficulties. Dying people who are yet able to reach out and offer a blessing to the people around them. People who are sick and still testify of God's faithfulness. Examples of famous people are Mother Teresa, Ghandi, Mandella, and King.

When we apply the idea of living out of a mystical consciousness, of living out of the Holy Spirit, or of finding meaning in the experiences of the past year, what does that do to the value we have placed on a year gone by? For me, it transforms it completely. I see the wider meaning of everything that has happened. I see above all the amazing steadfastness and providence of God. I see God's hand in babies that were born, the embraces of friends, changing seasons, in the sunshine and rain, in illness and recovery, in endings and new beginnings. A mystical consciousness, or, in other words, a spiritual perspective, infuses all things with a perspective from God. It makes all things new and value free. It transforms all experiences, both good and bad, into a blessing and it connects them into a coherent whole.

I have added a photograph to this column. It represents or symbolizes layers of awareness and consciousness. At first glance I see two people walking across a log in a river. Upon further reflection I see two people caring for each other. Looking still deeper I see concepts such as leaving behind, letting go, surrender, anticipation, hopefulness, reflection, protection and moving on.

May our goal for this coming year be to live out of the spirit filled consciousness where joys and sorrows are shared and transformed into a blessing because we are transformed and able to experience God's deeper meaning and purpose.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via e-mail at: vicky@telus.net

Is the church failing divorced people? ...continued from p. 15

Christians. It is also the best method to minister to those who are products of divorce. Divorce is hard on everyone involved, but the recovery is much faster if the person is growing spiritually. Healthy Christians are a strong shield of protection against divorce.

Divorced people are all around the church. As a person who watches statistics, I have wondered if one of the reasons church attendance is declining is that we aren't reaching the divorced people of society; one of the fastest growing segments of the population.

The church doesn't have to embrace divorce, but it should certainly love the people who are being hurt

by divorce and offer solutions to hopefully change the culture away from divorce. That will never occur if the subject of divorce is taboo in our churches or there is no plan with how to address the issue of divorce.

Certainly Jesus would have hated divorce. His father does. I have the idea, however, that if Jesus lived in our culture he would have contacted the man who had been missing from church these past three years. My question for the church today is this: Shouldn't we do likewise?

Ron Edmondson, Mustard Seed Ministry www.mustardseedministry.com

JANUARY 23, 2006

News

Compass Direct's top 10 news stories of 2005

1. Dramatic spike in Eritrea

Eritrea dramatically accelerated its imprisonment and torture of Christians even as the U.S. State Department designated it as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for the second consecutive year. By October the number of Eritrean Christians confirmed to be jailed for their religious beliefs had shot up to a total of 1,778, nearly double the documented count in April. At least 26 full-time Protestant pastors and Orthodox clergy were jailed and their personal bank accounts frozen by government order, causing severe suffering for their families.

The regime of President Isaias Afwerki stripped Eritrean Orthodox Patriarch Abune Antonios of his ecclesiastical authority on August 7, and the country's only Anglican priest, the Rev. Nelson Fernandez, was abruptly ordered out of the country in early October.

Since May 2002, the Eritrean government has outlawed all Christian meetings for worship except those of the officially registered Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran churches – but the regime began jailing and harassing key leaders of even the legally recognized churches this year. On September 23, Eritrea became the first nation ever sanctioned by the U.S. State Department under the 1998 Religious Freedom Act for failure to address severe violations of religious freedom.

2. Hollow promises in Vietnam

Vietnam Prime Minister Phan Van Khai's historic visit to the United States in June, an equally historic (secret) human rights agreement between the two countries in May, and supposedly less restrictive religion legislation introduced in November 2004 all made headlines but had no effect on continued high levels of persecution of Christians.

The Mennonite church continued to face the kind of harassment documented by missionary Truong Tri Hien, who submitted testimony to the U.S. Congress on June 20 showing how local officials have abused administrative powers to harass the denomination. The Rev. Nguyen Hong Quang, a Mennonite pastor convicted of an offense he denied having committed, was freed from prison on August 30 as part of Vietnam's National Day amnesty after enduring more than a year of harsh conditions and pressure to renounce his faith. While he was in prison, authorities destroyed a 16-foot section of his Mennonite center and home in a dispute over a building add-on permit. All attempts by the Vietnam Mennonite church to seek guidance on how to register, including appeals to the country's prime minister, have gone unanswered.

Typical of persecution elsewhere, authorities in Quang Ngai Province incited a mob to burn down the home of evangelist Dinh Van Hoang on August 21 because he would not sign a paper denying his Christian

faith. Likewise, on July 26 and 31, authorities in the same province destroyed the homes of 10 ethnic Hre families because they would not renounce Christ. Understandably, house church leaders in Vietnam remained skeptical of Vietnam's supposedly liberalized religion laws inviting unofficial churches to register. In spite of the flurry of official activity, Vietnam remained on the U.S. State Department's list of the world's worst violators of religious freedom in 2005.

3. State-sponsored persecution in Iran

In Iran, an Islamic court on May 28 acquitted Christian lay pastor Hamid Pourmand on charges of apostasy and proselytizing, though he continued to serve a three-year jail sentence for "deceiving the Iranian armed forces" by not reporting his conversion to Christianity. Despite clear evidence to the contrary, a military tribunal had ruled him guilty, dishonorably discharged him and handed down the maximum three-year prison sentence. Though he has not suffered physical mistreatment since his acquittal for apostasy, the 48-year-old Pourmand has been subjected to repeated pressure to recant his Christian faith and return to Islam.

Such government-sponsored persecution tends to pave the way for vigilante "religious police" and acts of violence among Muslim extremists. On November 22, an Iranian convert to Christianity was arrested from his home in Gonbad-e-Kavus and stabbed to death, his bleeding body thrown in front of his home a few hours later.

The death of Ghorban Dordi Tourani, a 53-year-old house church pastor of Turkmen descent, came just days after Iran's new hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told an open meeting of the nation's 30 provincial governors that the government needed to put a stop to the burgeoning movement of house churches across Iran. "I will stop Christianity in this country," Ahmadinejad reportedly vowed. Before the end of November representatives of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security had arrested and severely tortured 10 other Christians in several cities, including Tehran.

4. Massive destruction in Pakistan

In Pakistan, some 2,000 Muslims armed with iron rods, axes and tins of kerosene ransacked and looted four churches, a convent, a mission-run school and several Christian homes in Sangla Hill on November 12 after the burning of the Quran led local mosques to appeal for Muslims to "teach the Christians a lesson."

The previous day Catholic Christian Yousaf Masih was gambling with his Muslim friend Saleem Sunihara near the Sangla Hill sports stadium. To avoid paying a large gambling debt, the Muslim set fire



Indonesian Sunday school teachers Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti and Ratna Bangun at their trial.

to old pages of the Quran kept in a nearby storage room and blamed the fire on Masih. Eyewitnesses told a joint fact-finding team from Jubilee Campaign and the Lahore-based Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) that they saw Sunihara throw a burning match into the room.

Several busloads of Muslim men arrived in Sangla Hill to join the mob the morning of November 12, and hundreds of Christian families, mostly poor farmers and laborers, fled the area during and after the attack. Police not only failed to protect the Christian places of worship but joined the crowd in vandalizing Catholic and Presbyterian churches.

Sangla Hill police also arrested and tortured four of Masih's six brothers, prompting the alleged blasphemer to give himself up in exchange for their release. Masih was held at the Sheikhpura jail. The homes of Masih and his brothers were burned to the ground, with no one able to confirm the whereabouts of his wife and three children. Addressing a crowd of 3,000 men at the Jamia Masjid Rizvia mosque in Sangla Hill on December 2, Muslim clerics flanked by government officials demanded the public execution of Masih.

5. Sunday school teachers jailed in Indonesia

In a disturbing development for a country with a relative degree of religious freedom, Indonesian judges on September 1 sentenced three women to three years in prison for allowing Muslim children to attend a Christian Sunday school program. Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti and Ratna Bangun received the sentence after judges found them guilty of violating the Child Protection Act of 2002, which forbids "deception, lies or enticement" causing a child to convert to another religion.

The Sunday school teachers had instructed the children to get permission from their parents before attending the program, and those who did not were asked to go home. None of the children had converted to Christianity. Muslim parents had been photographed with their children during the Sunday school activities, but when Islamic leaders lodged a complaint, the parents refused to testify in support of the women.

No witnesses testified or provided evidence of the charges that the women had lied, deceived, or forced the children into changing their religion. The three defendants, described as "ordinary housewives," were relieved that they had not been given the maximum five-year prison sentence but were devastated to be separated from their children, who range in age from 6 to one daughter in her 20s.

As they have done throughout the trial, Islamic extremists made murderous threats both inside and outside the courtroom. Several truckloads of extremists arrived; one brought a coffin to bury the accused if they were found innocent. The defendants, witnesses and judges were continually threatened with death by hundreds of Islamic radicals if the women were acquitted.

6. Sham trial in Egypt

A Christian with dual U.S./Egyptian citizenship who retired and went to Egypt to begin a shelter for troubled young women – especially Coptic girls who are lured into marrying Muslim men with promises of escape from economic deprivation – was sentenced to one year in jail on October 20 after a teenager at the shelter lodged unsubstantiated accusations against him. Coptic Christian Shafik Saleh Shafik went into hiding in Egypt while his lawyers pursued an appeal over the controversial conviction of illicitly holding a minor at his shelter.

Magda Refaat Gayed, then 17, had accused Shafik of beating and raping her as well, though a physician's report refuted these charges. Her Christian parents had signed over custody of their daughter to Shafik in September 2004, after police recovered her from an Islamist group. She had fled her family two weeks earlier and was reportedly living with the Muslim religious leader of an Islamist group, learning Muslim rituals in hopes of converting and marrying a Muslim young man. Though Shafik was convicted on October 20, the verdict detailing charges against him were not revealed until November 13.

Many of the Christian young women at Shafik's shelter were brought there after their families recovered them from Muslim groups determined to spread Islam by abducting and converting them. The court initially ordered police to illegally transport the underage Gayed to an Islamic center to officially convert to Islam. Moreover, several witnesses threatened to kill Shafik if the court found him innocent.

7. Pastor Cai jailed in China

In China, a judge found house church pastor Cai Zhuohua and three other relatives guilty on November 8 of "illegal business practices" – a little more than eight months after new Regulations on Religious Affairs, effective March 1, strengthened a ban on

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News/Ecology

Compass Direct's top 10 news stories ...continued from p. 17

illegal religious publications and increased the penalty for printing or distributing them without government approval. The judge sentenced Cai, 34, to three years, his wife Xiao Yunfei to two years and her brother to 18 months. Cai's sister-in-law Hu Jinyun was found guilty of concealing illegally acquired goods but escaped prison because she had provided information to police.

Cai's mother, Cai Laiyi - now caring for Cai's 5-year-old son - told Reuters that the prosecution had not found a single witness to testify that Cai had earned money from the sale of the books. Cai, who led six Beijing house churches, said the books were printed for free distribution within house church networks.

The four were held for 10 months before the case finally went to trial on July 7. Defense lawyers acknowledged that the literature was printed without permission but argued that the defendants could not be charged with "economic crimes" since the Bibles were never intended for sale. Gao Zhisheng, a key lawyer on the defense team, received notice on November 4 that his law practice was suspended for a year, making an appeal extremely difficult. (Gao said police have made attempts on his life and harassed his family, and he now faces imminent arrest after releasing two reports in late 2005 on the torture of Falun Gong members and the rights of minorities in Xinjiang province.)

Moreover, a clerk from the court visited Pastor Cai to warn him that his sentence would be increased if he "annoyed" judges with an appeal. The defendants appealed anyway, which the court rejected on December 20 (leaving their verdicts and sentences unchanged).

8. Legal and physical assaults in India

In a year of weekly incidents of violence against Christians and the introduction of a bill that could make Rajasthan the sixth state restricting religious conversions in India, the Supreme Court on November 28 deferred - for the third time - ruling on whether Dalit Christians (low-caste "untouchables") can be denied job and education rights. Dalits belonging to Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh faiths qualify for a government plan that reserves 26 percent of jobs and educational places for them. Under current laws, Dalits who convert to Christianity or Islam lose their reservation privileges.

Christian leaders said India's 16 million Dalit Christians are extremely frustrated and demoralized by the government's position. In October, government attorneys had delayed a ruling by telling justices that a commission had been set up to study a broad range of issues surrounding government reservations for Dalits. That commission, which Christian leaders dismissed as a way of stalling the issue, is due to finish its work next year. Additionally, throughout

2005 police routinely refused to register complaints from Christians who were assaulted by Hindu extremists.

9. Islamization in Northern Nigeria

Christians in Nigeria's northern quarters were frequent targets of violence in 2005 as the imposition of sharia in 2001 in 12 states continued to feed Islamic rage. A Muslim militant attack on the Christian community in Damsa village, Adamawa state, on February 4, killed 36 people and displaced about 3,000 others. In Niger state, where Christians make up half of the population, Islamic officials seized Christians' property, discriminated against them in the public sector, and forced Christian girls to marry Muslims. As of October, nine cases of forceful conversions of Christian girls below the age of 14 were reported to the office of the Niger chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria; many other cases go unreported.

State authorities found pretexts to force churches to relocate out of their towns. In Kano state, Christian children were denied admission into public schools, and those that were admitted were forced to study Arabic, Islam, and say Islamic prayers. Christians in Bari Dorayi village built a nursery and primary school for their children, but the government halted construction. The state has recruited 9,000 Muslims, known as Hisba, who have been trained as enforcers of sharia, acting as instruments of coercion, intimidation and harassment.

Even in Christian-majority Plateau state, where sharia has not been imposed, Muslims worked for "Islamization" to break the state's position as a launch point for missions to the north - destroying churches, appointing Muslims into political positions of power and denying Christians land to build churches.

10. Gruesome violence in Indonesia

A series of gruesome attacks showed all the signs of attempts by Muslim extremists to provoke Christians into religious war. A bombing on May 28 in the Christian market of Tentena left 22 dead and at least 49 injured. Two witnesses in the ensuing trial were shot dead in Poso district, as was a policeman involved in the investigation.

On October 27, another bomb exploded in a Christian bus en route from Aplu to Tentena. In late October in Poso, four teenage girls were assaulted while walking to their Christian high school. Theresa Morangke, Alfita Pohwo and Yarni Sambue were beheaded while a fourth, Noviana Malewa, is still recovering from serious injuries. All three heads were found in plastic bags with a note stating in part, "We will murder 100 more Christian teenagers and their heads will be presented as presents."

Two more schoolgirls - one Christian and one Muslim - were shot on November 8. Machete-

Who's in charge here?

Curt Gesch

Somehow or another a video series called *The Unendangered Species* arrived in my 6th grade closet. This series tries to inform students about a number of species of wildlife that have come back from extreme population declines. Students learn about elk (wapiti), white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, wood ducks, pronghorn antelope, and trumpeter swans.

I'm quite sure that the purpose of making these videos was not only to inform students, but also to counter the anti-hunting sentiments to which they are exposed. The video series presents hunters as sportsmen who spearheaded the efforts to preserve habitat, restock barren areas, through donations of time, interest, and money. Hunters are also portrayed as a natural population control of some of these species.

Some people, however, oppose hunting and are not convinced by arguments such as those shown on the video. Many see hunting as an unnecessary and unnatural, (possibly) cruel activity.

Let's leave this video series, however, and look at the series that, to my knowledge, has not been produced: a look at wildlife/traffic collisions. Here are some items to consider:

- State Farm Insurance estimates that "1.5 million vehicles collide with deer every year, resulting in 150 motorists [sic] death and \$1.1 billion in vehicle damages." Pennsylvania has the dubious honor of leading the U.S. in deer/vehicle collisions.
- In 2000, "collisions between vehicles and wildlife cost the [Manitoba] provincial auto insurance agency \$16.2 million ... with 200 people injured in the 8200 collisions that were reported."
- In 1999, Bill Koonz (Manitoba Conservation) estimated that about "25 per cent of the total adult deer population living in [Winnipeg] were being killed in traffic each year!"
- The Ontario Ministry of Transportation tells us that "Motor vehicle/wild animal collisions are increasing annually. In 2003, 13,729 collisions were reported. Many more go unreported." The most dangerous area in Ontario is the Ottawa region.
- "In 2004, Saskatchewan Government Insurance reported almost 11,000 accident claims stemming from deer collisions that cost the system \$26.4 million."
- "In 2004, approximately 9,000 animal-related collisions occurred, costing [ICBC] policyholders more than \$23 million."
- Banff National Park has become the scene of such highway slaughter that fencing and wildlife crossing projects have been undertaken at great expense. Fencing, however, does disrupt historical animal movement patterns.

Probably it would come as no surprise that cost estimates figure prominently in the various statistics given above. Insurance companies and policy-holders are directly affected by wildlife/vehicle accidents. Injury and mortality figures probably are the next most-frequently quoted statistics (although why they aren't listed before money matters may be revealing).

Almost absent in the many Internet sites I visited was, however, mention of the maiming and slow death of the animals affected. Hunters who wound an animal are required and equipped to end its suffering by statute.

I can't quite envision an office-worker returning to his/her suburban home in the Ottawa valley, hitting a deer, changing into winter clothing, leaving the car with a rifle (no handguns, please) taken along "just in case," crawling through or over a fence and finishing off a deer. Nor can I envision public funding for enough conservation officers or provincial police officers to do this job to minimize animal suffering.

After considering the costs of human health and life, other questions keep pushing their way into my mind.

Not questions like:

How high will insurance premiums rise?

Or Is sport hunting inherently evil?

But these:

Who's in charge of this earth (cf. Psalm 115:16)?

What do road-kills tell us about the state of the peaceable kingdom?

Curt Gesch wrote his first article in CC (then Calvinist Contact) decades ago. It was called "Stewardship in the swamp." He is a school teacher from British Columbia. He and his wife, Betsy, have four children. Three live in Inuvik, N.W.T., where there are few road kills (only one road); the fourth lives in Ontario where there are many roads.

wielding assailants attacked three young people, killing one of them, on November 18, and a Christian couple was shot and seriously wounded on November 19. Finally, in Central

Sulawesi in the early morning hours of December 31, a bomb explosion in a market of a Christian area of Palu killed eight people and left 56 others injured.

Opinion

Citizenship loyalty in a hostile world



Welcome to
my perch
Bert Witvoet

So, the editor put me on a pedestal when he introduced my first column in the Christmas issue. By doing so he makes me look like a pedantic pedagogue waiting to be knocked off his pedestal by a pedestrian peddler of questionable pedigree.

Actually, I prefer the column heading "Welcome to My Perch" because of my affinity with birds (I used to breed canaries and I love watching birds feed at our feeding station.) You have to admit, a perch is an unpretentious and precarious resting place. "Perch" has a whimsical quality to it that suits my spirit much better than an idolatrous "pedestal."

Of course, people can knock me off my perch too, but that reflects more on their cruelty than on any suggestion of pretentious behavior on my part. People that chase birds off their perch are not exactly heroes in my book.

And, yes, a perch is often a high-up branch that provides a better view than an earth-bound pedestal. You will find that many of my column articles try to provide a bird's-eye view of society. I'm a big-picture kind of guy, not a detailer. Sometimes I can't see the trees for the forest. But that's where my spouse comes in. We complement (and sometimes irritate) each other very well that way. She loves detail.

But let me get to the topic of this week:

Being a loyal citizen.

Things haven't changed much for Christians ever since Jesus told his followers that while they are in this world they are not of the world. That was quite a curve ball he threw them. "In" but not "of." What does that mean? What a conundrum this nice little distinction has wrought for Christians throughout the centuries.

We have just been through an election campaign, and, if you're like me, you feel as if you're torn by conflicting loyalties. You're a citizen of Canada at the same time as you are a stranger. You probably decided to vote as a good Canadian citizen should. But did you hold your nose, just a little bit? Or are you enthusiastically caught up in the outcome of the election?

For the Israelites it was a little easier in Old Testament times. They could be in Israel and of Israel at the same time, as long as Israel lived by the Torah. They could sing psalms about Jerusalem, their capital city. Imagine singing hymns in our churches about Ottawa! "Oh Ottawa, the golden, with milk and honey blessed. They stand those Senators (hockey guys, not government-appointed wise guys) all jubilant with song. How lovely is that city, the home of God's elect!" Hmmm. Maybe the reference to "Senators" does have to do with the Upper Chamber. They certainly aren't the people's elect.

All kidding aside, for us who live in the dispensation of the torn temple veil, knowing

the difference between in and of is not so simple. We have a bit of difficulty discerning where we are in and where we are out. It's not a matter of being in and out of religion, by the way. Sometimes we have to fight the religious as fearlessly as the secular. Satan has done a pretty good job of invading our Father's world. The enemy is within us, too, and that really messes things up. Now I have to fight myself sometimes.

What a wretched Calvinist I am. Who will deliver me from this snake pit of in but not of.

A hostile world

According to Michael S. Horton, a professor at Westminster Seminary in California, "Instead of being in the world but not of it, [Christians in America] easily become of the world but not in it" (*Christianity Today*, January 2006). He is pointing to "pseudo-Christian subcultures" that are arising in the United States. But I suppose it applies to all of us who conform to the world in our lifestyles but shun the world in our witness. Ouch! We become of the world but not in it. That's what Jesus thought of the Pharisees, too. "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world," he said to the pseudo-pious religious leaders of his time (John 8: 23).

To be of this world means that you reject God and that you die in your sins. It means that instead of having God as your Father, it's Satan who's your Papa. That's why Jesus is concerned about his followers and prays: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

Apparently, Jesus sees this world as a very dangerous place. That's why he sent the Holy Spirit - the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Encourager, the Security Guard, the Truth Speaker, the Joy Giver. We need help in this dark world.

In addition, Jesus, through his Apostle Paul, urges us to put on military dress and wield military equipment as well. He suggests an ammunition belt of truth around our waist, a bullet-proof vest of righteousness around our torso, a riot shield of faith in our one hand, an AK-47 of the Spirit (the Word of God) in the other, and, to complete the outfit, we get a helmet with night goggles of salvation plunked on our head. For our feet, so that we don't trip or get burdened down, he recommends the leather boots of readiness that come from the gospel of peace.

The picture is clear: we have to be mobile, well equipped, alert, and no easy prey for the devil. We're up against a formidable foe: the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. It looks like a combination of human authority figures who serve Satan and the world of devils. But don't sing "Onward Christian soldiers" because that's too militant for those who see no evil and hear no evil.

Of course, we do not fight with worldly weapons (the militaristic outfit of Ephesians 6 is just a metaphor, you bleeding-heart lib-

eral!). Paul reminded the Corinthians that, although "we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10: 3). So it's a not a bloody body battle, but a heart battle - a spiritual pure-thought, kind-word, strong-will and good-deed battle.

Identify "world" please

But as we stand there, fully equipped, we may feel a bit like Don Quixote. Where's the enemy. Is it that windmill over there? Is it Paul Martin? Steven Harper? Jack Layton? Or is it Gilles Duceppe? All of them look a bit like windmills, come to think of it. Who are we supposed to fight? The world? Yes, but who is the world?

The concept of "world" must be understood properly. It's not everything you see around you, as in "I want to see the world." "World," in the way that Jesus talked about it, is that part of humanity which stands in enmity over against God and his church. It includes parts of the cultural products and systems created by that hostile humanity. This "world" is directed by Satan.

Yet, in spite of this enmity and Satan's power, God still lays claim to the world he created, which includes apostate people and their products. So don't write anybody or anything off. The church may not take on a posture of attack and conquest either; but it has to come as a servant. It has to conquer through love and patience and suffering. Also, the church must guard itself against conforming to the world. It must not, for example, become infected with the diseases of immorality and materialism that run rampant through the world.

To be in the world but not of it, we should not resort to external things like, different clothing, different dialect or jargon, different occupations, as a second-century Epistle to Diognetus makes clear:

"For Christians are distinguished neither by country nor by language nor by customs. For nowhere do they dwell in cities of their own, they do not use any strange form of speech.... But while they dwell in both Greek and barbarian cities, each as his lot was cast, and follow the customs of the land in dress and food and other matters of living, they show forth the remarkable and admittedly strange order of their own citizenship. They live in fatherlands of their own, but as aliens. They share all things as citizens and suffer all things as strangers. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign land.... They pass their days on earth, but they have their citizenship in heaven" (Christianity Today again, same article, same author Horton - not the one who hears a Who).

Testing our loyalty

Are you confused already? We all recognize the distinctions made here. But how do we apply them? What does it mean to have your citizenship in heaven? I think it means that our first loyalty is always to our heavenly homeland. Our primary citizenship is in the Kingdom of God.

So, rule number one: whenever the law of our earthly homeland is in conflict with God's will, we follow the law of God's kingdom. That makes us her Majesty's loyal opposition here below, if you will.

Rule number two: whenever there is no such contradiction, we stand with our fellow citizens in solidarity. We show the same concern as they do for safety in the city, for the environment, for good craftsmanship, for just trade practices, for fair treatment of the poor, the weak and the alien, for good educational systems (public and private), for safe highways, good health systems, for the flourishing of the arts, and for honest politicians - yes! Honest politicians!

But sometimes our choices are not so clear. We all want to be good Canadian citizens and exercise our right and responsibility to take part in elections. But how do we make our choice? Some of my children will probably vote Green or NDP, and for good reasons. As followers of Christ, they are concerned about the environment and about social injustices. I can't really fault them for their solidarity with nature and the poor. Some of my children will probably vote Conservative, also for good reasons: their solidarity with family, with the moral fabric of society and with the unborn. But none of these parties should enjoy their ultimate loyalty. Supporting each party wholeheartedly will violate their citizenship in heaven.

Just to remind ourselves of the divide between the world and God's kingdom, let's remember that Jesus said, "I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours" (John 19:9). My note in the NIV study Bible says: "The only prayer Jesus could pray for the world is that it cease to be worldly (i.e. opposed to God) and this he did pray...." The reference is to John 19:23: "So that the world may believe that you have sent me." But other than that, Jesus has no interest in interceding for the world, i.e., unbelievers. We must interpret this as a world that has hardened its heart and willfully rejects God's offer of salvation. Jesus still wants us to reach out to the not yet hardened world with love and compassion, so that they may believe.

So here we are. On the one hand, "I am a stranger here [in Canada], within a foreign land. My home is far away, upon a golden strand." On the other hand, "This is my Father's world, and to my listening ear, all nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres." In but not of, eh? The easier we think that is, the less likely we will hit a home run with that curve ball Jesus keeps on throwing at us.

Classifieds

Classified	Birthday	Obituaries
<p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION <i>Christian Courier</i> is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date. RATES (GST added to all rates listed) All personal and family announcements, \$6 per square inch. rose@christiancourier.ca Display advertising re. businesses and organizations, \$8 per square inch. ads@christiancourier.ca PHOTOS There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged per square inch but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.</p> <p>PERSONAL ADS <i>Christian Courier</i> would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is \$25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at \$16 P.I. (per insertion). All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS We offer a \$25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in <i>Christian Courier</i> and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.</p> <p>SUBMITTING YOUR AD: <i>Christian Courier</i>, 1 Hiscott St. St Catharines ON L2R 1C7 fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above</p> <p>OTHER INFORMATION <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style. Please provide us with clear copy. <i>Christian Courier</i> is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.</p>	<p>On February 13, 2006, D.V. with deep thanks to God</p> <p>JACOB KUNTZ will celebrate his 80th birthday.</p> <p>We as his family invite you to a celebratory Open House on that day from 3 - 5 p.m. in the Horizon Hall at King Tower, Holland Christian Homes, 35 Kingknoll Drive Brampton, Ontario</p> <p>Address: 1502 King Tower - 35 Kingknoll Drive Brampton ON L6Y 5G5</p> <p>Anniversaries</p> <p>BOB AND TRUIS HOEKSTRA We wish to congratulate you on your 50th Anniversary on January 25, 2006</p> <p>From: Jake & Hillie Hoekstra Pete & Jaanna Hoekstra Joanne Hoekstra 8 grandchildren & 2 great-grandchildren God Bless You</p> <p>Address: 215 Belford Rd RR#2, Brighton ON K0K 1H0</p> <p>1956 February 1 2006</p> <p>With thankfulness to the Lord for his many blessings</p> <p>OBE AND ATSIE MOBACH with their children, invite you to join them as they celebrate the occasion of their 50th Wedding Anniversary.</p> <p>An Open House will be held D.V. at Calvin C.R.C. 420 Highway 5, Dundas. February 4, 2006 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.</p> <p>Home address: 63 Hwy #8, Dundas ON L9H 4V1 obemobach@sympatico.ca</p>	<p> Tzum, Netherlands Lacombe, Alberta John 14:1-4</p> <p>On December 27, 2005, the Lord took home our beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather - Pake -</p> <p>FRANK WASSENAAR at the age of 102.</p> <p>He was pre-deceased by his first wife Anna in 1977, his second wife Tena in 1993 as well as his step-daughter Wilma Kluyt in 2003 and a great-granddaughter Christine Pasveer in 2000.</p> <p>He was the beloved father of Audrey & Bill Noonhof loving stepfather of Jim Kluyt, Peter & Dorothy Hansum and John & Wilma Busaan as well as a cherished Pake of 5 grandchildren and 12 step-grandchildren & many great-grandchildren.</p> <p>The funeral service was held at Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Lacombe, Alberta on January 3, 2006 with Pastor Melle Pool officiating. Correspondence address is: 5025 59th Street Lacombe AB T4L 1M3</p> <p>April 9, 1947 December 21, 2005</p> <p>At Parkwood Hospital, London, on Wednesday, December 21, 2005</p> <p> IRENE KIERS (née Hanenburg) of Woodstock, peacefully went to be with her Lord at the age of 58.</p> <p>Beloved wife of Rick Loving mother of Susan Vander Kooij (Kiers), Peter Kiers, David Kiers, and Rick Kiers Dear grandma of Matthew and Kendra Vander Kooij and Carsin Kiers Sister of William Hanenburg, Les Hanenburg, Teena Bergman, Richard Hanenburg, Roy Hanenburg and Rennie VanderVelde</p> <p>Contact info: Rick Kiers 410 Aithlone Ave Woodstock ON N4S 7V8 (519) 537-5124 kienwood@aibn.com</p> <p>MARY (Maartje) VAN DYK nee Bol And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain; for the old order of things have passed away. Rev. 21:4</p> <p>At Shaom Manor, Dec. 23, 2005 in her 83rd year.</p> <p>Dearly loved mother of: Harry (Karen), Peter (Sheryl), Coby (Art), Gary, Ed (Kathy), all of Niagara Falls Mary (Hank) London, Albert (Theresa) Vernon BC Bill (Helen) Kitchener Oma to 17 grandchildren & 22 great-grandchildren</p> <p>Predeceased by her husband Bertus, brothers Dan and Willem Bol, by step-sister Co and grandson Michael Van Dyke</p> <p>Survived by her brother Piet Bol in the Netherlands</p> <p>Funeral service was held at the Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby on Dec. 28, 2005 followed by interment at the St. Davids United Church</p> <p>Correspondence: Mary Ennis, (phone: 519-472-3566) Unit 27 - 7 Cadieu Terrace, London ON N6K 4S8</p> <p> Rev. TYMEN HOFMAN a well-known pastor in the CRC and a regular contributor to CC, died Friday, January 6 after a long battle with throat cancer and complications arising from throat inflammation. He was 83 years old and has been living in Grand Rapids since his retirement.</p> <p>Tymen grew up in southern Alberta in the oldest CRC in the country. He was delighted that he was well enough to participate in the festivities for the 100th Anniversary celebrations held last summer in his home town.</p> <p>Besides pastoring several churches in the U.S. as well as Canada, Tymen invested great energy in recording some of the history of the CRC in Canada. He authored two books. In the <i>Strength of Their Years</i>, a history of the church in Nobleford, Alberta, and <i>The Canadian Story of the CRC</i>, a more comprehensive history.</p> <p>Tymen earned a degree in agriculture from the University of Alberta before he decided that he was being called to the ministry. He was ordained in 1951 as the first Canadian-born minister in the CRC.</p> <p>According to the Grand Rapids Press, his wife Cobi said, "He said to our pastor yesterday, 'I wanted to change the world, but I just didn't have enough time'."</p> <p>According to August Guillaume, he was very popular with the youth in Southern Alberta when he served as a pastor in Calgary (1955-1962).</p> <p>The Rev. Hofman's blunt, blustery opinions masked a good heart, said his friend the Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, quoted by the G.R. Press. "He could be very insistent things had to be this way, but it was balanced by a great sense of humor and self-deprecation," Kuyvenhoven said. Tymen had been fighting the impact of throat cancer for 14 years. Throat surgery turned his once-beautiful singing and preaching voice into a hoarse whisper.</p> <p>"He got tears in his eyes about it," Kuyvenhoven said. "Then he said, 'I'll sing in heaven again.'"</p> <p>Although he was unable to sing, he was excited about becoming an author after his retirement, and he continued to contribute through his writing till shortly before his death.</p> <p>I got to know Ty Hofman through his letters to the editor long before I ever met him. He was very articulate and he seemed to love writing, so I invited him to write a column. From his letters, I had expected him to write rather opinionated pieces, but he surprised me. He usually wrote articles that delighted in people - people of all sorts.</p> <p>Ty loved all of God's creation - but especially people, and he could write about them with true affection and an eye for detail. In a couple of columns, he expressed surprise that at his age he had become a writer.</p> <p>His books and columns were clearly labors of love. Like nearly all writers, he could barely tolerate editors, but when we met in person Ty was a warm, engaging fellow. When a writer can show love to an editor, that's a true sign of character. He couldn't understand why I wouldn't publish his highly laudatory pieces on George Bush, so I told him it was to save his reputation as a man of wisdom. He appreciated that sort of humor. Even as he took strongly principled stands, he always did so with a sense of humor.</p> <p>Tymen was a gift, not just to those to whom he ministered, but to the entire CRC. The new heaven and the new earth will be a better place with him there. He will add a touch of class and plenty of spice. God will enjoy him.</p> <p>Harry der Nederlanden</p>
<p>Working country girl (Edmonton area) will correspond with successful gentleman (60-65) interested in family life, horses, rodeos, and cowboy church - send photo.</p> <p>Reply to: File 2748 c/o <i>Christian Courier</i> 1 Hiscott St. St Catharines ON L2R 1C7</p> <p></p> <p>Bachelor, 40 years old, living in Southern Ontario, would like to meet a Christian woman 35 - 40 years of age.</p> <p>Reply to: File 2747 c/o <i>Christian Courier</i> 1 Hiscott St. St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7</p>	<p>Bed & Breakfast 'Nijenstein'</p> <p>Situated just south of Utrecht in a beautiful location, within a short drive's distance from the major cities.</p> <p>The actual accommodation is a lovely cottage located in our garden. In the garden we keep a number of farm animals, and it even contains a 2-hole (par 3) golfcourse. For reservations, contact: Piet and Henny Klomp Nijensteinseweg 45 4124 AT Hagestein The Netherlands +31 347 351258 or +31 622543510</p> <p>Email: piet.klomp@freeler.nl Website: www.bhnijenstein.nl</p> <p></p>	
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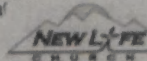
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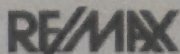
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

Jan 29 Organist Jonathan Oldengarm performs works by Bach, Karg-Elert and Grison, 3:00 p.m. at The Anglican Church of St. Clement, 59 Briar Hill Avenue, **Toronto**. See ad this issue.

May 6, 7 Grace CRC, **Coburg**, 50th anniversary. All invited to join in celebrations. Biletting available. Call 905-372-3642 or email: grace.church@bellnet.ca. Website: www.cobourggrace.org

May 6 Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Saturday evening at 7:30 p.m. St. Paul's Congregational Church, 450 Park Ave. Chatham Tickets \$10.00. Advance, Chatham: 351-7151. St. Thomas: 637-4357. Also available at the door.

May 7 Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Sunday evening at 7:30 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, St. Thomas. Freewill offering for the Canadian Bible Society. For information: (519) 637-4357.

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Sunday, July 16, 2006

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and attend at least one of these activities!



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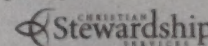
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News



Grand opening of Gardenview Long Term Care. Left to right Margaret Lambert C.E.O., Peter Zwart Retired administrator, Dick De Kleine Building committee co-chair, John Haverkamp Chairman of the board, Marie Trainer Mayor of Haldimand County, Craig Newsome MMMC Architects, Minne Van Der Molen Building committee co chair, Al Brouwer of Brouwer Construction.

New Christian long-term care facility opened in Ontario

Hank Hultink

The coat racks were overflowing. The hallways were crowded and we ran out of chairs. What a wonderful response to the invitation to celebrate the official opening of Gardenview Long Term Care facility in Townsend.

Tucked away in a corner of Haldimand County bordering on Norfolk County, Townsend does not have a high profile. But that is about to change as people become more familiar with "the Other Christian Retirement Home." With the completion of the Gardenview facility, the Parkview Meadows Retirement Village is a well-balanced continuum of care for retirees and the elderly needing some assistance or substantial care in their daily routines.

As expected, dignitaries – local provincial and federal – congratulated the board and staff on their perseverance and accomplishments. Those more closely identified with the project – longtime chairman John Haverkamp, for example – spoke of God's guidance and blessings beyond our imagination. Both are true. Many individuals persevered. Many blessings were received.

Margaret Lambert, C.E.O., set the tone for the celebration by listing a host of people involved, from the architect's team at MMMC (Brantford) and the general contractor Brouwer (St. Catharines) to recognition of board members who initiated the retirement village some twenty-five years ago. As with most "not for profit" ventures, this project also thrived through the splendid services of many volunteers. (You know who you are, folks, you have our sincere thanks.)

Unlike its sister organization, Shalom Manor (and Apartments) in Grimsby, the Parkview Meadows Retirement Village is not owned by the deacons of the Niagara and Hamilton Classes of the C.R.C. Parkview Meadows is owned by a "not for profit" corporation and operated by elected Christian board members.

As a Christian interdenominational retirement village we provide our seniors with a safe and rewarding lifestyle in residences that they are proud to call "home"

and where they are in the context of a Christian environment.

We invite you to visit us in person or via our website. As a relatively new board member to Parkview Meadows – yes, I had the privilege of serving on the board of Shalom Manor for many years (and loved it) – until we moved – I use the following sketch for myself to place the various "views" in the organization, perhaps it will be useful for you:

1984 Nanticoke Christian Senior Citizen Home Inc. established (This umbrella is the not-for-profit charitable corporation)

1986 Valleyview completed. Thirty rental units. (Independent living; no assistance) Parkview Meadows was incorporated at this point to meet Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. (CMHC) requirements.

1991 Brookview was built. (A three story apartment building housing 35 life lease units)

1992 Southview completed. (Full service residential suites, 29 units, available for those needing some assistance in their routines.)

2004 saw the commencement of construction for Gardenview, a 64 bed long term care facility dedicated in November 2005.

What a wonderful continuum. Being able to provide health care services in an environment supportive of their Christian values for our senior brother and sisters in Christ. We've relied on God's blessings in all our work since 1984. He has done great things! We were vividly reminded of this point by charter board member Ralph Hogeterp whose concluding prayer, not only recalled God's promises but also his promises delivered.

For details on placement, funding - yes you can help - or general information contact our C.E.O. Margaret Lambert at (519) 587-2448 or brows our website at www.parkviewmeadows.ca

News briefs

Religion and sexual behavior

Good news. At last a poll that indicates faith may triumph over hormones – at least some of the time. Adolescents who emphasize the importance of religion in their lives are less likely to engage in premarital sex than others. According to the poll "only" 45 percent of those to whom faith is important had "done it," while for those indifferent to religion 60 percent were sexually active.

Also reported by the poll: conservative Protestant men had the fewest lifetime sexual partners (5.4!) and the greatest likelihood that they had been faithful to their partners over the previous 18 months (74 percent). Those with no religion averaged 8.4 partners; however, 67 percent of them reported that they had been faithful over the previous 18 months.

That's only 7 percent difference between churchgoers and unchurched men, however. I wonder how the numbers would work out if you took a poll during football or hockey season. Would the gap become even smaller, I wonder? (Shame on you – you cynic!)

High cost of women

As rural South Africans move to the cities, the custom of paying a bride price to the prospective in-laws has changed – dramatically. Bride's families are no longer content with a couple of cows. What would you do with cows in an apartment?

Parents of attractive daughters are demanding cars, cash and major appliances.

Imagine this conversation:

"We got a 1995 Chevy and a new freezer for our daughter!"

"Oh yes, well, my daughter got us a 1999 Volvo and a large screen television – high definition."

Critics are talking about inflation. Daughters who once fetched a couple of cows are now costing love-stricken suitors ten times as much.

The bride price is saddling newlyweds with debts that hurt the marriage. Leaders are asking the government to intervene. The Canadian government might be of help here: how about a bride registry – like our gun registry?

It's a good thing we live in a more advanced civilization, one in which we spend thousands on the wedding celebrations instead of the bride.

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